

# Yiquan Beginners' Guide: Basic Skills

Version 2.0

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意拳

基本功

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Joseph P. Lau

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## A note from the author for Version 2:

*"Be warned: there is no end of opinions ready to be expressed. Studying them can go on forever and become very exhausting!" (Ecclesiastes 12:12 LB).*

Here are three skills for dealing with the information overload:

1. You need to know what is worth knowing and what isn't. Being selective is the first key to survival.
2. You need to understand the meaning of what you know. See the big picture; see how things relate. Proper perspective and solid grounding on science enables you to eliminate myths.
3. You need to know what to do with what you know. Yiquan is a learned skill; you need to practice to acquire this skill.

Joseph P. Lau  
June 18, 2010

**A note to you, the reader:**

1. Use the information herein as you see fit; however, may you never have to use the knowledge or the skills in an altercation.
2. Adhering faithfully to the primary Yiquan doctrine of simplicity, I have kept the presentation “simplistic”. If I am garrulous and repeat some points multiple times, they are important; I really want you to get them. Even then, this is not easy reading; it requires serious thinking to comprehend the theories and principles; and the theories and principles are useless unless they are put into practice.
3. The **Oral Traditions** are essence and wisdom of masters. I have preserved the original Chinese text for you to study, explore, and research. Some have much deeper meanings beyond my interpretations (which only reflect my present level of comprehension).
4. For the novice, this is not a teach yourself manual; it is a primer; you will ***not*** learn Yiquan by reading this manuscript alone. Nothing can replace competent firsthand hands-on instructions.
5. For the knowledgeable, please point out my errors; I want to learn from the experience of writing this too.

Joseph P. Lau  
July 15, 2006

## Yiquan Beginners' Guide (v2): Basic Skills

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## Chapter 1: Yiquan Overview (*Yiquan Gai Shu*, 意拳概述)

# 意 拳 概 述

Yiquan (意拳) is a reality-based Chinese martial art, a thinking man's practical martial art predicated on a scientific training and conditioning system involving mind-body synthesis that requires continual diligent development. The three main goals are:

1. Improving health (*Jian Shen*, 健身),
2. Studying the essence of practical martial arts (*Xun Li*, 寻理), and
3. Training for self-defense/combat (*Zi Wei*, 自卫).

In this chapter, the basis of the Yiquan general theories and principles will be presented, and the training and conditioning methods will be outlined.

The training methods in this manuscript are based on **Yao's** style Yiquan (姚氏意拳) as taught by Master **Yao ChengRong** (姚承荣老师) of Yiquan Martial Arts Academy (*Beijing Zhong Yi Wu Guan*, 北京中意武馆, <http://www.yiquan-zywg.com/english/home.html>), Beijing, China. Obviously, the description herein reflects only the author's present level of comprehension and all errors are the author's.

We emphasize, the information presented here is a way, but it is not the only way. You must use the information as you see fit; and practice as you feel inclined. As a guide must always lead, we will present some contents (that is hopefully) beyond your current level of achievement (or comprehension); you should explore and research these to create opportunities for unexpected enrichment. Furthermore, this manuscript does not and cannot replace a teacher; nothing can replace competent firsthand hands-on instructions.

诀曰:习拳必需得到名师的口传心授,还要悟透真髓,才有所成。

Oral Tradition: Good competent hands-on instructions and thorough comprehension of the theories and principles are absolutely essential for success in Yiquan training.

## History and Lineage (*Cheng Chuan*, 承传)

In the mid 1920s, with *Xing Yi Quan* (形意拳) as a foundation and incorporating the essence of numerous other styles into the grand synthesis, martial arts expert, Master *Wang XiangZhai* (王芗斋老师) created Yiquan (意拳 a.k.a. *Da Cheng Quan*, 大成拳). He rejected the traditional obsessions with intricate meretricious “forms of pattern” and “sequences of maneuvers” (*Tao Lu*, 套路) as a training method and emphasized the simplicity of essence by elevating “*mind-intent*” or “*mindful-ness*” (*Yi*, 意) to a paramount position in martial arts training. He emphasized the supreme importance of “*close attention*” and the “*intentional component of the mind*”.

Master *Yao ZongXun* (姚宗勋老师), designated successor of Master *Wang XiangZhai*, further explained that Yiquan is neither a training of the mind nor a physical practice alone. The two must be synthesized. The essence of Yiquan can only be cultivated by harmony and integration of both the mind and body. Visualization (mental guided imagery) must be employed in “*relaxed-standing*” (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) to direct neuromuscular coordination conditioning to cultivate whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体谐调) and mind-body synthesis (*Quan Shen Zhi Fa Xiang He*, 全身之法相合). Kinesthetic perception of the internal/external “*isometric-opposing-force-pairs*” (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力) is used to seek, sense, feel, perceive, explore, experience, cultivate, understand, and master the whole-body “*balanced-force*” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力).

Master *Yao ChengRong* (姚承荣老师), son of Master *Yao ZongXun*, inherited the mantle of direct lineage succession of the third generation. Master *Yao ChengRong* said, “Skills and knowledge cannot be passed-on like an inheritance. Yiquan skills can only be acquired through the investment of constant and diligent practice.” He has immersed himself into Yiquan training since he was 9 years old. At present, Master *Yao ChengRong* and his son, Master *Yao Yue* (姚悦老师) are continuing the advancement, development, and promotion of Yiquan.

Master *Yao ChengRong* believes time is valuable and is not a commodity that can be purchased; time once passed cannot be replaced. Therefore, when he teaches Yiquan, he does not waste time dealing with flowery or false information masquerading as knowledge, instead he presents truthful information in clear, concise, and easy to understand terms. He is the Principal and Chief Instructor of Yiquan Martial Arts Academy (*Beijing Zhong Yi Wu Guan*, 北京中意武馆), a professional organization he founded in 1993 to research, develop, and promote Yiquan. The intention is to make Yiquan Martial Arts Academy (*Beijing Zhong Yi Wu*



**Guan**, 北京中意武馆) the source for distributing credible Yiquan information. His innovative training methods include introducing “*push-hands*” (*Tui Shou*, 推手) and *sparring* (*San Shou*, 散手) early and mixing advanced and beginning students into the same practice session so the beginners can grasp the “*combat mindset*” from the start.

At Yiquan Martial Arts Academy (*Beijing Zhong Yi Wu Guan*, 北京中意武馆, <http://www.yiquan-zywg.com/english/home.html>), every student is carefully evaluated and the curriculum is adjusted for his individual requirements.

## Philosophy and Principles

Yiquan is a skill; there is no secret training method. It can be learned with practice. Master **Wang XiangZhai** (王芃斋老师) named this training system “*Yiquan*” (意拳) because *mind-intent* (*Yi*, 意) is involved in every aspect of its training. To master Yiquan, you must thoroughly understand the theories and principles involved, and put them into practice through mental directed training and conditioning to cultivate the power of the intentional component of the mind, synthesizing your mind and body. Attention/mindful-ness/mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) is the key. To learn a new physical skill, mental and physical practice will not be effective if you do not pay “*close attention*”, i.e., if you do not practice with *mindful-ness/mind-intent* (*Yi*, 意).

诀曰：习拳最贵明理和精神有力。

**Oral Tradition:** To master Yiquan, you must thoroughly understand the principles involved; comprehend the theories and doctrines; cultivate and strengthen your intentional component of the mind through paying “close attention” to mental directed conditioning; practice with mindful-ness.

“Reality-based” means each and every maneuver/technique/tactic/strategy must be effective in self-defense and combat while all training and conditioning procedures must be grounded on the laws of classical physics (Newtonian) and principles of physiology. Training and conditioning is the key to expertise, and to be effective your training and conditioning must be as realistic as possible. The primary Yiquan philosophy is:

诀曰：一法不立，无法不容。

**Oral Tradition:** No rules exist precluding the adoption of any useful principle or tactic.

With proven principles and sound doctrines as your foundation, you must adopt, explore, cultivate, and refine all useful maneuvers/techniques/tactics; integrate them into your training and conditioning. *If it works for you, do it, develop it.*

诀曰：拳道基服膺，无长不汇集。

Oral Tradition: Adhere faithfully to proven principles and sound doctrines; adopt all beneficial maneuvers and techniques.

The important thing is to understand the reasons (principles and doctrines) for executing each maneuver/technique/tactic (ask why?) and select suitable ones for you. You become effective by being selective. Instinctive, natural, subconscious, spontaneous movements are the simplest, quickest, and most accurate. This is the principle of “*simplicity of choice*”. Do not blindly copy/imitate another person's technique. You are unique. What works for him may or may not work for you (ask how?). Always think for yourself and ask: *Why do you do what you do?* The philosophy of Yiquan is to keep maneuvers/techniques “*simple*”. Discard any useless techniques/principles; make deliberate conscious choices. Specifically, all indirect and flowery moves are unnecessary. Development implies eliminating all unnecessary movements and negative mental distractions.

诀曰：拳拳服膺，动静处中，顺乎自然，合乎需要，能守能用。

Oral Tradition: Keep your mind open to all theories, techniques, and tactics. Take what is useful, what works best for you, then develop from there. Always, use mind-intent (Yi, 意) to guide your actions. Adhere faithfully to the proven principles and sound doctrines of martial arts (Quan, 拳) and apply them. Make these principles your habit; then your every move becomes practice, reinforcing your instinctive natural ability.

You must practice diligently; theories and principles are useless if you fail to put them into practice. Repetition is the mother of all skills; realistic training is the key to any expertise; regular constant practice is required for maintaining skill and combat readiness.

Let's debunk two myths:

1. ***Secret martial arts techniques***: they do not exist; no method is secret. All things being equal, the bigger, stronger participant usually wins physical conflicts/encounters. However, martial arts training to develop strength, coordination and “*agility*” can, in a hand-to-hand conflict/confrontation, tip the scales in your favor; whoever can handle the quickest rate of change has the advantage.
2. ***Perfect form or posture***: there is none; no posture is perfect. Adhering to uncompromising forms and techniques is useless. Due to different body structures and temperament, each person's posture and execution of a maneuver/technique will be different. Therefore, practice with “*comfortable natural ease*”, “*focus attention*”, and “*mind-intent*”. Do not be overly concerned about imitating exact physical forms. The appropriate external form will emerge

if you grasp the intentional component (*Yi*, 意) of the mind and the proper neuromuscular coordination (*Zheng Ti Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 整体连通一贯) to deliver the “*balanced-force*” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力).

What sets Yiquan apart from traditional Chinese martial arts? There is no form, no pattern, and no sequence (*Wu Tao Lu*, 无套路, *Wu Gu Ding Zhao Shi*, 无固定招式). It rejected the traditional obsessions with intricate forms of pattern and sequences of maneuvers as a training method and emphasized the simplicity of essence (*Jing Sui*, 精髓). By elevating *mindfulness/mind-intent* (*Yi*, 意) to a paramount position in martial arts training and conditioning, Yiquan emphasized the supreme importance of the intentional component of the mind, recognizing these mental training and conditioning exercises as the foundation for all skills, while explaining in detail the mental activities (visualization) and procedures required to synthesize your mind and body into a highly coordinated whole-body harmony unity (*Quan Shen Xiang He*, 全身相合) from which you can then discharge/release a focused balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) in a hand-to-hand encounter. That is, Yiquan make use of “*Neuro-Linguistic Programming*” (NLP) modeling and imaging techniques.

诀曰:若真正掌握了内在的运动规律,则可随意变更,不受姿势限制。

Oral Tradition: When you have mastered the proper internal neuromuscular coordination of a maneuver/technique to deliver the balanced-force, you can adapt and refine its external form as desired without restriction and become form-less.

The goal is to attain a level of “*un-conscious competence*”, i.e., the ability to spontaneously, reflexively perform the proper maneuvers/techniques at the proper time without conscious thinking, to be without deliberate mind-intent (a sticking mind) in an encounter. The principle of “*simplicity of choice*” implies instinctive, natural, subconscious, spontaneous movements are the simplest, quickest, and most accurate while conscious choice reaction takes longer.

诀曰:发挥本能,有意而练,无意而用。

Oral Tradition: Develop and cultivate your natural abilities, guiding it with mind-intent; train with purpose and mindfulness (close attention) until your skills become spontaneous reflexes, executing maneuvers in combat with no conscious mind-intent or effort.

Fighting with no preconceived method (*Quan Wu Quan*, 拳无拳), the mind holding no deliberate intent (*Yi Wu Yi*, 意无意), performing the proper action at the proper time without conscious intent, “*method-less-ness*” and “*empty-minded-ness*” are awakening to the true knowledge.

诀曰: 拳无拳, 意无意, 无拳无意是真义。

Oral Tradition: Method becomes “no-method”, intent becomes “no-intent”, “no-method” and “no-intent” is the true principle.

When your mind and body are totally in synch, the movements will flow with no conscious effort (*De Li*, 得力); things seem to automatically fall into their proper places without you even realizing that you were thinking about them; you are “*in the zone*”. Towards this end, each maneuver/technique requires the following concurrent sequential overlapping training and conditioning phases:

1. 诀曰: 以意领力, 用意不用力。  
诀曰: 力应松整, 缓运中解, 静松中求。

Use *mind-intent* (*Yi*, 意) to lead/guide/direct all actions to ingrain the neuromuscular coordination. Pay “*close attention*” (*Jing Shen Ji Zhong*, 精神集中); use slow motion and minimal muscular force to achieve “relaxation from stillness” (*Jing Zhong Qiu Song*, 静中求松) and cultivate/nurture “whole-body coordination from relaxation” (*Song Zhong Qiu Zheng*, 松中求整).

2. 诀曰: 舒展连通, 肌肉如一。  
诀曰: 应敌知机, 均在有意无意之间。

Perform the actions with *comfortable natural ease* with proper “*body mechanics*” and whole-body harmony (see optimal musculoskeletal *alignment* and *connectedness* below); do the maneuvers “*with no conscious mind-intent or effort*”; operate between conscious-ness and *un-conscious-ness*.

3. 诀曰: 打法定要先上身, 手脚齐到法为真。

Make the actions into instinctive natural “*habit*”; internalize the actions to become automatic (spontaneous) reflexes. Act without deliberate mind-intent or effort to execute maneuvers with “*simultaneous whole-body movement*” (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动) and maximum (mental/physical) freedom.

4. 诀曰: 有形练到无形处, 练到无形是真功。

Be “*form-less*” and be able to sense, change, and adapt according to your opponent; make your skills become spontaneous reflexes.

That is, if you want to understand a maneuver/technique, you must take it to the *extremes* and examine its *opposites* (*Mao Dun*, 矛盾). The only way you get skill is through diligent practice.

诀曰：松则动作灵速。

Practice it with soft relaxed slow motion to let your mind-body experience and become ingrained with the neuromuscular coordination.

诀曰：紧则力发雄浑。

Practice it with hard fast motion (tensed focus) to develop strength, speed, and the timing for delivering power.

Practice it in sparring to gauge the effectiveness of the technique. The actual performance of the maneuver depends on your opponent's actions, which cannot be predicted. You must make it *form-less* (*Xing Wu Xing*, 形无形) by changing and adapting to your opponent. To effectively change and adapt, you cannot be passive; instead you must initiate and control engagement opportunities, to switch from one maneuver/technique to another more rapidly than your opponent, compressing his time scale to generate confusion. You must know your opponent's timing and use a timing your opponent does not expect (*Zhi Pai Ren Jun Dou*, 知拍任君斗). Operating at a quicker and different tempo, and not just moving faster, is the essence of Yiquan's time-based fast transient tactic.

诀曰：习之若恒久，不期自然至，变化形无形，周旋意无意。

Oral Tradition: Repetition is the mother of all skills; realistic training leads to expertise. Perform the proper action at the proper time with no conscious effort and awareness; change maneuvers spontaneously (automatically) without being aware of your action; be versatile, flexible, and form-less; switch tactics, as required by the situation, subconsciously with no conscious mind-intent.

诀曰：应机而发，因势而变。

Oral Tradition: Be agile; change and adapt to act on all engagement opportunities; respond to circumstances spontaneously.

How does “*mind-intent*” (*Yi*, 意) influence Yiquan training and conditioning? The basic principles is: “*Close attention*” is the key to learning any physical skill and relaxed-standing “*stillness*” practice with visualization (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) helps to regulate it (*Jing Song Zhong Qiu*, 静松中求). Let's examine the relationship of mind-intent and visualization.

## Mind-Intent (*Yi*, 意) & Visualization (*Yi Nian Huo Dong*, 意念活动)

The basis of Yiquan is to work with your body's spontaneous response to develop your instinctive natural fighting capabilities (*Fa Hui Ben Neng*, 发挥本能). The more a maneuver/technique runs counter to your instinctive natural abilities, the more you will have to think (*Yong Yi Xiang*, 用意想) about that maneuver/technique in order to accomplish it. Thus, it is harder for it to become “*habit*”, to become spontaneous reflex. Therefore, training a maneuver/technique that is against your instinctive natural abilities is futile because that training will not become habit and would fail under great duress. In this section, using present-day terminology, we attempt to explore the theoretical basis of mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) in the Yiquan training and conditioning methodology to synthesize your mind-body, to internalize your skills to become spontaneous reflexes (*Zi Dong Hua*, 自动化).

Physical action is the result of relaxing and tensing of appropriate muscles ligaments and tendons connected to the skeletal bone structure. Your mind, using signals through the nervous system to your muscles ligaments and tendons, directs all voluntary physical actions. Thus, in all levels of individual conflict/combat, the intentional component of the mind (*Yi*, 意) is of supreme importance, and the tool to synthesize your mind-body is “*mental visualization*” (*Yi Nian Huo Dong*, 意念活动: *Jing Shen Jia Jie*, 精神假借; *Yi Nian You Dao*, 意念诱导).

Your mind and your body influence each other. Learning any physical skill begins in the thinking part of the brain i.e., the excited neurons activate the area associated with emotions and the motor cortex that controls the muscles. Conversely, intense mental and physical practice can influence the mind and the brain. There are physiological manifestations of what is on your mind and psychological manifestations of what happens to you physically; thoughts have direct and powerful influence on physiological functions and vice versa. Yiquan uses this mind-body feedback loop in its training and conditioning procedures to synthesize your mind-body to achieve whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调). Through mental visualization (thinking and/or imagining) you can condition and harmonize your mind-body relationship, enhance your neuromuscular coordination, and improve your physical performance. Regular practice of neuromuscular coordination exercises will increase your attention, improve your memory, regulate your emotion, sharpen your focus, increase your awareness, and improve your decision-making under stress. These improvements of your mental capability under stress enable you to better perform (more automatically and reliably) physical maneuvers that require attention and concentration. Mental visualization increases your ability to maintain mental clarity and allows you to rehearse or experience events mentally, learning a new lesson with each repetition. Yiquan uses this to harmonize your neuromuscular coordination, re-patterning your neuromuscular system into a new habit of always using “*whole-body strength*” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). Training and conditioning consists of the strengthening of the mind-body connections. Mental practice of physical maneuvers (imagine doing the moves while keeping *still*) leads to mastery. Realistic training leads to expertise.

诀曰:心理作用於生理,生理作用於心理,交相辉映。

Oral Tradition: Your mind and your body influence each other.

Let us consider the reasons for using “*mind-intent*” (*Yi*, 意) and mental visualization (*Yi Nian Huo Dong*, 意念活动) in the following three major aspects: managing stress, learning physical skills, and applying tactics.

## Managing Stress

Relaxed “*stillness*” practice with visualization (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) reduces stress and reshapes the brain, directly affecting its function and structure. Yiquan advocates focusing on an *image* (use visualization) in relaxed *stillness* training (*Jing Song Zhong Qiu*, 静松中求).

In a physical conflict/confrontation, your mind and body are both in a state of “*stress response*”. If the mind-body feedback loop is dominated by fear, the psycho-physical reactions cause natural chemicals (adrenaline, cortisol, etc.) to be released into the blood stream, enhancing your strength and endurance. Your body draws on energy reserves to “*fight-or-flight*”. Instinctively:

1. Your muscles tense in anticipation of a burst of physical actions.
2. Your circulatory system diverts blood to the large muscle groups most closely related to strength and speed; your gross motor movements are amplified. Extra blood for your large muscles means less for your small muscles; fine and complex motor movements deteriorate.
3. Your analytical thinking and creative capacity shrinks.
4. Your sensory perceptions become distorted. You square yourself towards the threat and focus both eyes on the threat to gather information for your brain. (You *observe* the situation.) Your eyes may tunnel in on or blank out part of what is before you.
5. Auditory blocking and time distortion are common.
6. You crouch naturally with a forward weight bias onto the balls of your feet. (You *orient* towards your opponent.)

This is your “*fight-or-flight response*”. Such “*stress response*” (your body produces adrenaline; your heart beats faster; you breathe more rapidly and you are more alert) may hinder your ability to perform physical moves with fluidity and limberness. In other word, you may “*freeze*”.

Knowing that “*stress response*” is your body’s reaction to a situation can give you the “*competitive edge*” provided you relax appropriately. The key is to break the stress feedback

loop, to make your mind-body relax, to invoke the “*relaxation response*” to defuse the stress, and to make your motor movements gross and simplistic. This may be achieved through neuromuscular conditioning to increase confidence and to ingrain your skills to become spontaneous reflexes. Addressing this, the foundation of Yiquan is “*relaxed-standing*” (**Zhan Zhuang**, 站桩) with mental visualization (including both mental directed activities, **Yi Nian You Dao**, 意念诱导 and mental imagery, **Jing Shen Jia Jie**, 精神假借). *Stillness* training is used because your mind is most susceptible to visualization suggestions when you are *relaxed* (**Song**, 松) and *still* (**Jing**, 静).

诀曰: 相 争 相 连, 全 身 之 法 相 合 谓 之 合, 非 形 势 相 对 谓 之 合。

One goal is to synthesize your mind-body (**Quan Shen Zhi Fa Xiang He**, 全身之法相合); integrate your neuromuscular system into a relaxed coordinated whole-body harmony unity (**Zheng Ti Xie Tiao**, 整体协调) without slackening of your mind-intent and attention. This is developed through kinesthetic perception of mentally induced internal/external “*isometric-opposing-force-pairs*” (**Xiang Zheng Xiang Lian**, 相争相连).

诀曰: 用 意 不 用 力。

Oral Tradition: Use mind-intent to guide your action and do not use brute strength/force.

The body performs better when you “let it go” than when you “try to drive it”. Relaxing the muscles add to speed; tensed antagonist muscles slows down movement. Psycho-physical stress creates muscle tension, which reduces blood flow to the working muscles and tendons; without enough oxygen, these tissues become fatigued and are more subject to injury.

诀曰: 必 须 先 学 会 放 松, 然 后 再 作 其 他 意 念 活 动。

Oral Tradition: You must master whole-body (mental and physical) relaxation before attempting any other mentally directed activities.

Therefore, developing the *relaxation response* from *stillness* (**Jing Zhong Qiu Song**, 静中求松) is an essential first step in mental and physical conditioning for fighting and combat. The essence is to relax appropriately (**Song Jin Wu Guo Zheng**, 松紧勿过正), relax your attitude while maintaining whole-body harmony with no muscular “*rigidity*” (**Jiang Ying**, 僵硬) and no slackening of the mind (**Qiu Shu Zhan De Li**, 求舒展得力). Yiquan’s basic relaxed-standing training achieves mental and physical relaxation by putting you in a relatively stationary position where your entire body is relaxed, your breathing is normal, automatic, and unattended, and your mind completely at ease, concentrated on relaxation conditioning while maintaining musculoskeletal support. In this “*stillness*” (**Jing**, 静) phase of the training, you learn to stay mentally and physically relaxed without losing your attention and coordination.



While practicing relaxed-standing without directed mental activity is still beneficial as long as you can invoke the *relaxation response*, the next step, Yiquan's relaxed-standing fighting posture training (*Ji Ji Zhuang*, 技击桩), uses mental directed activity in a relatively stationary posture to execute muscular tension (*Jin*, 紧) and relaxation (*Song*, 松) exchanges (using kinesthetic perception and self-exploration). This “*motion-in-stillness*” (*Jing Zhong Zhi Dong*, 静中之动) training synthesizes your mind and body into a coordinated whole-body harmony unity by using mental imagery or mental visualization to guide your kinesthetic perception and neuromuscular coordination system to re-pattern your neuromuscular system into a new habit of using whole-body strength and force (*Song Zhong Qiu Zheng*, 松中求整). Appropriate relaxation and tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换), equilibrium and balance, *centered-ness* and *level-ness* (*Zhong Ping*, 中平), and multiple-directional “*balanced-force*” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) are cultivated in this stage.

诀曰：松 紧 紧 松 勿 过 正，虚 实 实 虚 得 中 平。

Oral Tradition: Opposites are coexisting transitional phases. Relaxation and tension must be appropriately balanced. The in-substantial and substantial (void and actuality) are controlled to maintain equilibrium, balance, centered-ness, and level-ness.

## Learning Physical Skills

The process of learning a physical skill is called Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), which consists of *modeling* and *imaging*. In modeling you mimic (or mirror) the movements of the teacher and in imaging you think through (or visualization) the movements, seeing with your mind's eye, to ingrain the skill.

In Yiquan, we divide imaging (visualization, *Yi Nian Huo Dong*, 意念活动) into active mental directed activities (*Yi Nian You Dao*, 意念诱导) and passive mental visualization (*Jing Shen Jia Jie*, 精神假借). You use visualization or mental directed activities to:

1. Synthesize your mind-body into a highly coordinated whole-body harmony unity (*Quan Shen Xiang He*, 全身相合) and to ingrain the actions of maneuvers,
2. Feel/perceive (kinesthetic perception) the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) and let your body sense, learn, explore, experience, and cultivate the balanced-force through mentally induced neuromuscular perception (*You Yi Er Lian*, 有意而练) of relaxation/tension exchanges (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换), and
3. Make your conflict/confrontation response spontaneous, automatic, and become second nature; develop the confrontation response and/or the *combat mindset* with appropriate stress management; use positive thinking and crisis rehearsal (mental

movies) to set decision-making reference points for *un*-conscious spontaneous reflexive action (*Wu Yi Er Yong*, 无意而用).

NOTES: Visualization requires mental rehearsal or the use of mental movies to play out a scenario in your mind. Obviously, each scenario requires its special visualization script. We will present the details in the appropriate sections.

诀曰: 习之若恒久, 不期自然至。

However, visualization and mental rehearsals are not substitutes for physical practice. You must know how to correctly perform the physical moves of maneuvers/techniques before you can visualize and mental rehearse using them successfully. Visualization (imaging) complements, enhances, and ingrains the modeling training but does not replace it; though physical response patterns can be preconditioned by mental visualization to the point of becoming spontaneous, reflexive, and requiring no conscious effort.

With visualization, you are using conscious suggestions (mental directed activities) to affect *un*-conscious processes. Visualization is closely related to the concepts of “*motionless-movement*” (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动) and “*motion-in-stillness*” (*Jing Zhong Zhi Dong*, 静中之动): When you rehearse mentally with no movement (relative), the visual images actually train you, teaching a new lesson with every repetition. As you visualize performing various physical movements, your body responds as if you were having the experience for real. Brain signals initiate motor responses that are below your conscious awareness. Your muscles tense and contract as if they were actually making the moves you are imagining. This gives them practice and coordination. As you mentally visualize practicing the correct movement, “*muscle memory*” is established which makes that movement easier and quicker to perform correctly in reality. Under pressure, these responses will become automatic because they are the ones with which your body is most familiar. You don't have to think to react; your mind and body work in synch, know how to move properly because they have been through the proper reaction in your mental visualization (imaging).

诀曰: 动静处中, 顺乎自然, 合乎需要, 能守能用。

In a real situation, your “*confrontation response*” will tell your *un*-conscious mind: I have been there, done that (decision-making reference points for *un*-conscious spontaneous actions have been established), no need to be tensed or to panic, just relax and execute the proper techniques at the proper time with no conscious mind-intent or attention (顺乎自然, 合乎需要); movements flow with no conscious effort, you fight as you have trained. The Yiquan training, “*trial-and-feel-of-force*” (*Shi Li*, 试力), is in reality, actual physical practice (modeling) with mental directed activities (imaging). Here you mentally use your entire body to experience/sense its drag/friction with the surrounding air (*Ti Cha Zu Li*, 体察阻力) to heighten your “*awareness*” (kinesthetic perception and self-exploration), to “*look*” inwards, to “*listen*” to your body, and to “*read*” your muscles. The way you think determines how you “*feel*”; the way you “*feel*”

determines how you *act*. You must “*feel*” the “*path-of-force-propagation*” (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路). This is perhaps the most difficult and crucial step in Yiquan training. Whether you can eventually “*focus*” and discharge/release the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) neatly with a particular maneuver/technique in an encounter depends heavily on your achievement here. You must practice each maneuver/technique with slow, fast, large, and small intentional movements with the “*trial-and-feel*” (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercises. If you want to understand a maneuver/technique, you must take it to the extremes and examine its opposites.

One perceives/feels for the balanced-force in order to explore, experience, understand, know, and learn to use it. When you are aware of and can feel the force with your body in a relatively stationary position (as in relaxed-standing exercise, *Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩), you must proceed by training to keep that same feeling when using larger movement of the arms and torso but still keeping the feet stationary (*Ding Bu Shi Li*, 定步试力). The next phase involves the footwork or stepping exercises (*Huo Bu Shi Li*, 活步试力). When the balanced-force can be felt with the entire body in motion you would have acquired the proper “*body mechanics*”; the practice of focusing and/or discharging/releasing the balanced-force (power discharge/release, *Fa Li*, 发力) and augmenting it with breath control (reverse breathing and grunting, *Shi Sheng*, 试声) can be practiced.

诀曰：习拳时心动身不动则枉然，身动心不动亦枉然。

We must again emphasize that mental rehearsal is not a substitute for actual physical practice, and physical practice without mental activities may only be good calisthenics. When practicing practical maneuvers/techniques, Yiquan stresses that you must use mental directed activities to visualize an imaginary opponent (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌). First, you should learn the basic movements of the maneuvers/techniques, guided by mind-intent (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力). As the movements feel natural, polish them with fluid movements training where you improve speed, form, and precision, operating effortlessly without conscious mind-intent (between conscious-ness and *un*-conscious-ness) with *comfortable natural ease* (*Shu Shi De Li*, 舒适得力). Continue with full speed acceleration and power under stressful realistic circumstances (i.e., use them in sparring). Next, without movement, imagine yourself going through the proper actions of the maneuvers or techniques; be sure you *feel* yourself doing the movements. By repeatedly visualizing the proper movements in slow motion and internalizing the correct way to execute the maneuvers, you will eventually master them. Reinforce maneuvers/techniques with this mental imagery exercise until these moves become automatic and second nature, become “*habit*”; then your skills become spontaneous reflexes. Second nature physical skills residing in “*muscle memory*” requires *un*-conscious mental processing because the conscious brain cannot keep up with the high speed processing necessary to perform these high-level skills. Only second nature *un*-conscious physical skills can be performed under great duress without deliberate conscious thought.

The differences between “*feeling*” for the balanced-force (*Mo Li*, 摸力) to ingrain “*the-path-of-force-propagation*” (*Zhao Jing*, 找劲), focusing the force (*Fa Li*, 发力), and solo practice of a particular maneuver/technique (*Dan Cao Shou*, 单操手) are in mental visualizations. When *feeling* for the force (*Mo Li*, 摸力), use visualization to guide your kinesthetic perception of the intentional movement. Concentrate on letting your entire body *feel* the friction of the surrounding air and the internal isometric-opposing-forces (*Zheng Li*, 争力) between body elements, thereby developing neuromuscular coordination of a whole-body harmony unity. When practicing power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力) to focus the force, tense your whole-body at delivery, *exploding* (*Bao Fa*, 爆发) your whole-body balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) augmented by “grunting” (breath control techniques) onto your target. Stay relaxed before and after the delivery; always be prepared for a follow up. During solo practice (*Dan Cao Shou*, 单操手); use mental imagery to visualize the presence and actions of an imaginary opponent (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌) as a “*crisis rehearsal*”. Although the external manifestations of these three practices appear very similar, the respective mental activities of each one differ.

## Applying Tactics

诀曰：应机而发，因势而变，不加思索，顺手拈来，不期然而然，莫知为而为。

In combat, individuals first *Observe* and *Orient* themselves so they can understand the situation, then they make a *Decision* to direct their activities, and then they take *Action* (OODA cycle – John Boyd). The combat mindset (your courage, your will and confidence to win) and the *un-conscious* efficient irregular use of this OODA cycle are essential to success/victory. You must develop the ability to initiate and control engagement opportunities by operating at a faster (or different) tempo inside your opponent’s time scale to generate confusion and disorder (i.e., use time-based fast transient tactics; *Zhi Pai Ren Jun Dou*, 知拍任君斗). Therefore, to prepare for combat, training must be realistic, involving sparring with real opponents, because the actual performance of a maneuver/technique in practice depends on your opponent’s actions, which cannot be predicted. Push-hands (*Tui Shou*, 推手) and sparring (*San Shou*, 散手) provide training to develop this “*agility*” - the ability to sense, adapt and change tactics according to your opponent (*Ling Huo Bian Hua*, 灵活变化). Your skills must become spontaneous reflexes (*Wu Yi Er Yong*, 无意而用) before they are useful.

Yiquan also uses “*crisis rehearsal*”, visualizing different defense/combat scenarios (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌) and playing out these scenarios in your head, to train your combat mindset, to set *un-conscious* decision-making reference points. This role-playing or visualization prepares you to take action with less lag time, overcomes your “*startled response*”, and introduces control over your “*loss of discipline under stress*”. Repetitions of mental visualization build your confidence and help you to stay relaxed when you need to use your skills; you learn a new lesson with every mental repetition. However, you must have technical ability i.e., your proper “*body*

*mechanics*” must be spontaneous, habitual and automatic, before you can apply tactics. Only then can you relegate to your powerful *un*-conscious mind to concentrate on discovering your opponent’s reactions, anticipating his intentions and devising the tactics to beat him; attacking your opponent’s strategy is vitally important.

诀曰：因敌变化示神奇。

Oral Tradition: The ability to sense, adapt and change according to your opponent (*agility*) is genius. It is crucial for success/victory.

诀曰：不觉力之力，莫大乎变化。

Oral Tradition: Adapt and change is the key to successfully using your balanced-force with no conscious effort.

We have explored the logic of using mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) in Yiquan training and conditioning procedures. We found that based on real experience in physiology and on sound doctrines mind-intent is vital for reducing stress, learning of physical skills, and applying tactics for fighting/combat. Next, we will examine Yiquan’s essence: “*body mechanics*” or core/torso maneuvers (*Shen Fa*, 身法) and mental preparation (*Xin Fa*, 心法).

## Essence of Yiquan Body Mechanics (*Shen Fa*, 身法)

Yiquan emphasizes mind-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体谐调), to use your whole-body neuromuscular coordination, to put whole-body (*Zheng Ti*, 整体) against localized elements (*Ju Bu*, 局部), and to put strength against weakness. The following essential elements must be synthesized and incorporated into the “*body mechanics*” (*Shen Fa*, 身法) of your Yiquan training and conditioning. They are inter-related and inseparable; we only itemize them for ease of explanation.

### 1. Mind-intent (*Yi*, 意)

诀曰：以意领力，意到力到，意力不分。

Mind-intent (*Yi*, 意), strictly speaking, is not *body mechanics*, it is the intentional component of the mind (*Xin Fa*, 心法); it is the tool that you would use to synthesize all aspects of your *body mechanics*. Initially you should use mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to lead, direct, and guide your force (*Li*, 力), neuromuscular coordination, and all your actions (*Yi*

*Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力). Use mental visualization; do not use brute strength; all actions should be supple and gentle like pulling silk thread from a cocoon, done with focused attention/concentration. The initial goals of using mind-intent (through mental imaging or visualization) are:

- a. To seek/induce mind-body relaxation; specifically to find a relax tranquil mental and physical state,
- b. To seek/induce kinesthetic *feeling* or perception for self-exploration of coordinated neuromuscular whole-body movement; to perceive, explore, experience, and learn the internal/external isometric-opposing-force-pairs and cultivate your balanced-force,
- c. To invoke a positive combat mindset, develop courage, and set *un*-conscious decision-making reference points for your instinctive instantaneous reflexes.

诀曰:力量在身外去求取,意念在无心中操持。

诀曰:假借无穷宇宙力。

Your mind-intent, attention, and focused-concentration must be used with no effort. You must learn to operate using your mind-intent “*effortlessly*” between your conscious-ness and *un*-conscious-ness (意念在无心中操持).

诀曰:应敌知机,均在有意无意之间。

Oral Tradition: Visualize interacting and harmonizing with your surrounding. Let your mind-body work effortlessly between your conscious mind and your *un*-conscious mind as if nothing critical is happening.

## 2. Connected-ness (*Zheng Ti Lian Guan Xiang Tong*, 整体连贯相通)

诀曰:节节贯通,自头至足要一气相贯。

诀曰:处处连贯相通,高度协调统一。

Relax all your muscles, especially the muscles of your lower back and torso, except those required to maintain your *frame* (posture, *Jian Jia*, 肩架). Mentally “*connect*” your upper and lower body by visualizing internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力) between your feet and your head (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力). Visualize your core muscles working in conjunction to maintain optimal musculoskeletal “*alignment*” and equilibrium, transmitting (or “*conducting*”) the force from the ground to your hands (taking up power from the ground). This “*connected-ness*” (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) is achieved by using the relaxed tension of

mentally induced internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力). The major pairs are: the vertical pair mildly elongating your spine, the pair between your front knee and rear hip, the pair between your arms (e.g., visualizing hugging a balloon and propping out your elbows) and the pair between your wrists and your neck. Visualize and feel the imaginary light springs connecting these points when you move (*Xiang Zheng Xiang Lian*, 相争相连).

诀曰: 浑身关节灵活, 筋肉收敛而抒发。

诀曰: 形曲力直。

Keep all your joints bent (not locked), relaxed and mildly extended, flexible, and larger than 90 degrees.

a. **Use optimal musculoskeletal “alignment”**

诀曰: 骨骼支撑。

Oral Tradition: Use optimal skeletal support.

Maintain your proper posture, use straight bone alignment to maintain your structure and posture. Let your skeletal bone structure support your body weight, freeing your muscles to propel your whole-body into fluid motions for your strikes. Conversely, when receiving an applied force, relax all your muscles; let your body be a conduit; transmit all external applied force through your body to the ground; use spring-like elastic muscular contraction/extension, twisting limbs, and body pivots to change its direction. Let your subconscious response do these adjustments automatically. Mildly extend all your joints to maintain flexibility and increase your spring-like muscular contraction/extension elasticity (*Tan Li*, 弹力) through relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换).

b. **Keep the “ground path pure” (“Ground Path” - Mike Sigman)**

诀曰: 消息全凭后足蹬。

诀曰: 双腿内夹, 力从足生, 拔地欲飞, 全身力一。

诀曰: 舒展连通, 气力均整, 肌肉如一。

Take up power from the ground through your legs, waist, and back (*Li Cong Zu Sheng*, 力从足生). Specifically, pushing off the feet (“drilling” with both legs, *Tui Si Zuan*, 腿似钻), continue with concurrent sequential overlapping opening of your joints (ankles, knees, hips, torso, shoulders, and elbows), straightening your legs and trunk, shifting your weight and add the fast pivoting of your hips (*Yao Si Che Lun*, 腰似车轮), waist, torso, and shoulders, twisting of your limbs,

the upper arm swing, and culminate in a forearm, wrist, and finger snap allow you to use your whole-body in hitting and pushing. The concurrent sequential overlapping action of each segment, “*transmitting the ground*” through “*the-path-of-force-propagation*”, culminating in maximum speed at the impact point, releasing power with your whole-body propelling your impact point, is referred to as whole-body “*connected-ness*” (*Zheng Ti Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 整体连通一贯). Keep your body relaxed and your feet directly under the body to “*transmit the solidity of the ground*” to your impact point.

### 3. Whole-body harmony (*Quan Shen Xie Tiao Tong Yi*, 全身协调统一)

诀曰：浑身气力匀整，全身力一。

诀曰：一动无处不动，整体协调。

Do not use localized movement (*Ju Bu*, 局部). Whole-body harmony is synthesizing all your abilities into an effective performance of an action. The well-coordinated whole-body does everything smoothly with “*natural comfortable ease*” of movement (*Shu Shi De Li*, 舒适得力), even during maximum effort. This ease is achieved with minimal interference of antagonist muscular tension. Learning whole-body harmony is a matter of using mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to guide the development of the connections in the nervous system, using visualization to re-pattern your mind-body into a new habit of using strength in an integrated spring-like whole-body harmony unity. All actions are driven from the center (maintaining equilibrium); the impact point transmits the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) with correct timing of feet, waist, shoulders, elbows, and wrists motions at great speed. Move each body element only as part of your harmonized whole-body movement; every body element (hands, feet, torso and mind) moves in unison; no element moves independently (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动).

### 4. Spiral-winding movement (*Zuan Fan*, 钻翻, *Luo Xuan*, 螺旋)

诀曰：一动全身转，螺旋力无形，遍体弹簧似。

诀曰：夹腿抖腰，多面螺旋。

Use your natural muscular winding in all your movement. The resulting helical spiral movement (silk reeling movement) permeating your whole-body contributes greatly to the accuracy of your blows, and to deflecting the direction of your opponent’s force (*Gai Bian Li Xiang*, 改变力向). The “*drilling*” (*Zuan*, 钻) of your legs, pivoting of your hips and waist, twisting of your arms (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋), and overturning of your elbows (*Zuan Fan*, 钻翻) add significant “snap” to your strikes (*Yi Dong Quan Shen Zhuan*, 一动全身转).



诀曰:起是钻,落是翻,腰似车轮腿似钻。

Oral Tradition: Rise is drill; down is overturn. Waist pivots like a wheel; legs twist like drills. Every move involves the twisting and pivoting of your whole-body in harmony.

## 5. Opposites (*Mao Dun*, 矛盾; *Zheng Li*, 争力)

诀曰:遍体无点不弹簧。

If you want to understand a maneuver/technique, you must take it to the *extremes* and examine its *opposites* (*Mao Dun*, 矛盾). Opposites cannot exist independently e.g., relaxation (*Song*, 松) is not independent of tension (*Jin*, 紧). You must mildly extend and align all your joints, keep them flexible (*Guan Jie Ling Huo*, 关节灵活) to provide, build-up, and cultivate your whole-body spring-like elastic force (*Tan Li*, 弹力) by perceiving and mentally inducing the contraction and elongation (opposites), the relaxation and tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换), of your muscles. This is accomplished by using mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) and visualization (*Yi Nian Huo Dong*, 意念活动) to direct and induce internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (visualize imaginary connecting springs) between your body elements (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力) and the external interaction between your body with the surrounding (*Shen Wai Zheng Li*, 身外争力). This results in relaxation and tension exchange between various elements of your body (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换), cultivating your whole-body spring-like elastic force (*Tan Li*, 弹力). While the ideal situation is learning to perceive (*feel*) these internal/external isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Nei Wai Zheng Li*, 内外争力) between every body element, the practical approach for a beginner is to concentrate primarily on the mentally induced isometric-opposing-force-pairs in the vertical direction (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力) between the top of your head and your feet (*Tou Xu Ling*, 头虚领; *Jiao Xia Cai*, 脚下踩).

诀曰:力由脊发,所发之力源自腰脊,即躯干及支体的弹力。

In essence, proper “*body mechanics*” arranges your every body element to distribute your balance and strength appropriately. This is achieved by maintaining flexibility and elasticity at all your joints, using your skeletal structure to support your weight while relaxed and mildly extending your tendons and muscles to achieve a spring-like whole-body harmony for your intended action, putting your synthesized whole-body in perfect harmony with your surrounding. *Connected-ness* and optimal *alignment* with a pure “*ground path*” (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) is the foundation for cultivating the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). Pushing off the

ground (*Deng Di*, 蹬地), inertia/momentum of your body movement (*Dong Dang*, 动荡), core/torso oscillation (*Gu Dang*, 鼓荡), and elastic spring-like contraction/extension of the muscular structure of your core and limbs (*Tan Li*, 弹力) are crucial components for generating power. When delivering explosive force, never lock any joint; always use curve physical form to deliver linear force (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直).

Incorporating these essentials of proper *body mechanics* into “*habit*” is counter-intuitive. It takes perception, exploration, experiment, experience, and practice to change localized actions into whole-body actions and to develop/condition your mind into new pattern of thinking. There is no development or growth without the willingness to change. And changing means letting go of the old ways, taking a loss (destruction), in order to experience the new (construction); exchanging your old localized habit (*Ju Bu*, 局部) into new harmonized whole-body habit (*Zheng Ti*, 整体) of using strength is best accomplished through relaxed-standing training and conditioning (*Zhuang Fa Huan Jing*, 桩法换劲).

You must make proper *body mechanics* your habit. Constant and diligent practice and refining are necessary to maintain readiness. Next, we will briefly describe the categories of Yiquan’s training system.

## The System

Yiquan basic skills (*Ji Ben Gong*, 基本功) training and conditioning consist of the following seven overlapping related categories, all of which must be synthesized as “*one*” in order to develop whole-body harmony of movement, action, and force (*Zheng*, 整).

### 1. Relaxed-Standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩)

诀曰：先由不动中去体会。

Oral Tradition: Relaxed-standing “*stillness*” practice with visualization, close attention, and kinesthetic perception is the foundation.

诀曰：独立守神，肌肉如一。

Oral Tradition: Use relaxed-standing “*stillness*” practice to synthesize your mind-body and musculoskeletal structure as “one”.

This practice harmonizes mind and body and cultivates whole-body coordination and power by re-patterning your neuromuscular coordination into new habits of using whole-body strength (**Zheng**, 整). If you assume a prescribed “*posture*” (**Zhuang**, 桩) and mental directed activity, you will, with practice, automatically assume the tactical, physical, and mental attitude that corresponds with that posture.

诀曰：以形取意，以意象形，意自形生，形随意转，式随意从，力由意发。

**Oral Tradition:** Physical form begets mind-intent; mind-intent modifies physical form.

As nerves and muscles are conditioned through repetitive mental directed activity with your body in a relatively fixed posture (in *stillness*), the brain learns where the limbs and joints are positioned at any time (kinesthetic perception). By mentally visualizing a maneuver/technique, your body reacts as if you are performing it; you learn a new lesson with every mental repetition. This phenomenon is called proprioception. Athletes use this innate ability to pattern their brains, to develop automatic nerve messages called engrams to the brain. They help hone to perfection the intense body movements of an athletic feat.

The first goal of relaxed-standing is learning to evoke the *relaxation response* (a tranquil whole-body state), seeking relaxation from stillness (**Jing Zhong Qiu Song**, 静中求松). Then you must develop a coordinated, whole-body awareness (kinesthetic perception) and the sense of a balanced-force (**Hun Yuan Li**, 浑元力) permeating the body using the “*motionless-movement*” (**Bu Dong Zhi Dong**, 不动之动) exercises. You visualize your movement involving your whole-body (all your joints and elements) but do not actually move physically (minimize your physical movement); the resulting slight movement is called “*motion-in-stillness*” (**Jing Zhong Zhi Dong**, 静中之动).

Relaxed-standing is the foundation and the highest level of training and conditioning in Yiquan. It must be practiced in a state of “*comfortable natural ease*” (**Shu Zhan Zi Ran**, 舒展自然) to exchange localized habit (**Ju Bu**, 局部) into new harmonized whole-body habit (**Zheng Ti**, 整体) of using strength (**Zhuang Fa Huan Jing**, 桩法换劲).

## 2. Trial-and-Feel (**Shi Li**, 试力)

诀曰：再由微动中求认识。

**Oral Tradition:** Develop whole-body harmony of actions and forces by slow-motion “*trial-and-feel*” (**Shi Li**, 试力) exercises.

诀曰：外练筋骨皮。

诀曰：揣摩意中力，关节若机轮。

Oral Tradition: Perceive and feel; comprehend, explore, and experience; look inwards, listen to your body, and read your muscles to “try to figure out” for yourself the force embedded in your intentional component (mind-intent and focus concentration).

Obviously, you cannot deliver force onto an opponent without external movement. “*Trial-and-feel*” (**Shi Li**, 试力) is the “*pathway from stillness to motion*”. Slow motion trial-and-feel is inseparable from relaxed-standing. Imagine moving through a sequence of slowly changing relaxed-standing postures. This is “*stillness-in-motion*” (**Dong Zhong Zhi Jing**, 动中之静).

You use kinesthetic perception (**Ti Ren**, 体认) to sense, seek, explore and understand, to experience, cultivate, and master the balanced-force. The balanced-force (**Hun Yuan Li**, 浑元力) refers to a strength manifested in the harmonized whole-body that yields the potential to release power explosively. You develop this strength by using your mind-intent to direct the action of your relaxed coordinated whole-body without using brute strength, contracting the primary mover (agonist) muscles while relaxing the antagonist muscles to avoid muscular rigidity (**Jiang Ying**, 僵硬) and interference (**Gan Rao**, 干扰). You “*feel*” for the balanced-force (**Mo Li**, 摸力) with your whole-body by slow repetition of selected intentional movements (**You Yi Yun Dong**, 有意运动), sense and perceive the concurrent overlapping sequential linkages (**Lian Tong**, 连通), exploring and learning from the experience. When you do something correctly hundreds of times, you establish a pattern and movement that is no longer conscious, i.e., you achieved *unconscious competence*. It provides speed and coordination through harmony of action. Repetition is the mother of all skills. Relaxed slow repetitive practice will train the nerves in the muscles to fire at just the right times and sequences. Initially, slow is smooth; then, smooth is fast. Thus, you re-coordinate your neuromuscular structure, allowing for the proper execution of maneuvers/techniques. However, trial-and-feel exercises must, eventually, include slow, fast, big, and small movements, combinations of techniques, as well as transitions to “explosive power discharge” (**Fa Li**, 发力). Exploring the opposites (**Mao Dun**, 矛盾) and incorporating isometric-opposing-force-pairs (**Zheng Li**, 争力) are essentials. To understand a maneuver/technique, you must take it to the *extremes* and examine its *opposites*.

### 3. Grunting (Breath Control; **Shi Sheng**, 试声)

诀曰：内练一口气。

诀曰：呼吸弹力。

It is natural to “*grunt*” involuntarily when you exert strength (discharging bursts of force). This phenomenon helps to focus your balanced-force; naturally integrating the whole-body action with your breathing musculature. The use of grunting in breath control and reverse breathing with short exhales augment your whole-body focus in a natural way, marshal your core muscles into immediate concerted action, harmonize your breathing with your muscular tension/relaxation exchange during a power release/discharge (***Fa Li***, 发力), compensating for the deficiencies of your effort. Harmony of action is prerequisite to the harmony of force.

#### 4. Footwork (***Zou Bu***, 走步, ***Mo Ca Bu***, 摩擦步)

诀曰:步不快则拳慢,步不稳则拳乱。

Oral Tradition: Slow footwork limits the speed of your attacks (punches); unstable footwork makes your attacks (punches) chaotic.

Footwork is decisive in hand-to-hand conflicts/encounters; you use it to control the “*interval*” (distance) from your opponent. Yiquan uses no jumps or leaps. Small and rapid steps are used to keep perfect balance, exact distance intervals, and the ability to attack/counter-attack. Basic footwork skills include a wading step (***Mo Ca Bu***, 摩擦步) and a skating step (step and glide), which looks deceptively simple but is effective in combat. This is essentially “trial-and-feel” exercise with your legs. It is essential to feel and perceive the balanced-force while training footwork.

#### 5. Release/Discharge of Power (***Fa Li***, 发力)

The result of your training is the ability to focus and discharge/release your balanced-force in any circumstance with appropriate maneuvers/techniques (***Sui Shi Fa Li***, 随时发力). This focusing and releasing of your balanced-force onto your opponent is the foundation for self-defense.

诀曰:不觉力之力,顺生于自然,不觉其力也,故谓之浑元。

The goal is to *effortlessly* release power *explosively* on contact (***Bu Jue Li Zhi Li***, 不觉力之力); release a burst of power at will from any point of contact with your opponent. The “*balanced-force*” (***Hun Yuan Li***, 浑元力) is that which employs the coordinated effort of the most massive muscles in the whole-body, primarily those in the upper legs and core, to “*transmit* the solidity of the ground” to the point of power release instinctively, naturally, and *effortlessly*. It eschews using only isolated or localized musculature; the

harmonized spring-like elastic whole-body musculature is employed “with no conscious effort” in a spontaneous, natural, and comfortable manner.

## 6. Push-Hands (*Tui Shou*, 推手)

诀曰：切磋棚挤着，万遍不失，乃为成艺，后方可随意应敌，因敌制胜也。

Push-hands is a training method allowing for friendly contact/competition and execution of techniques without the use of protective equipment. This practice increases the awareness for using your maneuvers/techniques and your balanced-force. It develops your “*agility*”, the ability to sense, adapt and change according to your opponent. In essence it is “*trial-and-feel*” exercise with an opponent. You must treat your training partner as an opponent; if you loaf and just go through the motions, you are wasting your time. Train to use your opponents guard hands against him, setting the foundation for striking on disengagement (*Tui Shou Duan Shou Jie He*, 推手断手结合). Care must be taken to follow through to the completion and execution of each technique without hesitation. Avoid the habit of stopping on contact; holding back habitually inevitably means you will hold back when fighting for real. You cannot turn holding back on or off at will.

## 7. Sparring and Fighting (*San Shou*, 散手 and *Ji Ji Fa*, 技击法)

诀曰：拳本无法，有法也空。

Push-hands cannot replace sparring; push-hands supplements sparring. The essence of Yiquan practice is the creative and irregular use of your balanced-force in your selected practical maneuvers/techniques. Besides the physical and mental training to synthesize your mind-body into a highly coordinated whole-body harmony unity, you must have the proper “*combat mindset*” (the confidence, courage, desire, and intent to win), the feel of distance interval (fighting measure), timing, accuracy, and angle of attack. These can only be gained from experience through sparring.

诀曰：若能出手而得已发未发时机之扼要，则非久经实作之惯手难能得也。

If you have any questions about a maneuver, the answers can always be found in sparring it out. You should view every sparring exercise as a learning opportunity; do not let the outcome affect your quest for knowledge and skill.

Remember your aim is not to master any methodical routine or sequences of pattern masquerading as solution to the dynamic problem of fighting. Train to relegate your actions to your powerful *un*-conscious mind, reacting spontaneously, instinctively, and instantaneously, making the proper moves at the proper time reflexively under stress with no conscious thinking (without a sticking mind).

In addition to the above seven training categories, accomplished Yiquan practitioners practice *shadow boxing* (*Ji Ying*, 击影) and/or free-style *solo exercises* (*Dan Cao Shou*, 单操手) called *Jian Wu* (健舞). This dance-like “*Fa Li and Shi Li*” practice uses different combinations of practical maneuvers/techniques with visualization of imaginary opponents (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌). It is absolutely essential to use positive thinking, visualize an opponent, and to use proper whole-body mechanics in all your solo crisis rehearsal practice. *Jian Wu* (健舞) is expressed with utmost freedom in four “free forms” (*Si Xing*, 四形):

|                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| <i>Hui Lang</i> , | 挥 浪。 |
| <i>You Long</i> , | 游 龙。 |
| <i>Bai He</i> ,   | 白 鹤。 |
| <i>Jing She</i> , | 惊 蛇。 |

These *Jian Wu* “free forms” (健舞) are beyond the scope of this guide on basic skills.

The above mentioned categories merge into one another; they are concurrent overlapping and sequential. Practice them together; integrate and synthesize them into one. Over emphasizing any one category is not genuine Yiquan training. As a practical matter, every Yiquan training session should include all these categories and the only way to get Yiquan skill is to practice it.

However, you must not train aimlessly; you should practice with purpose to eliminate your “*weakest links*”. Be honest in your evaluation of yourself and design training procedures to reach your goals. While repetition is the mother of all skills; realistic training is the key to any expertise. You acquire practical fighting skills only by actually doing and/or reacting with push-hands and sparring exercises, not from meretricious solo exercises. Push-hands and sparring (using body protection) must be your “*daily bread*”; winning or losing is not important in training, learning from the experience is. Learn to see Yiquan principles in practice; learn to see what Yiquan tactics look like when translated into actions. During these practices, you must treat your partner as a real opponent; do not hold back. Always follow through with an explosive push power release (with maximum force) or with a strike/blow because once you get into the habit of holding back, you will not be able to turn-on your power when you need it.

## Summary

Summarizing the process to achieving the “*whole-body harmony unity*” (*Ti Zheng Ru Zhu*, 体整如铸; *Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一):

First you must learn to invoke the *relaxation response* with relaxed-standing postures for health, relaxing and mildly extending your musculature and joints to achieve a state of relaxed *comfortable natural ease* (*Qiu Shu Zhan*, 求舒展).

Second, develop your musculoskeletal *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) by maintaining proper *frame* (*Jian Jia*, 肩架) and optimal *alignment*, perceiving isometric-opposing-forces (*Zheng Li*, 争力) within your own body, and extending this *connected-ness* throughout your whole-body to keep the *ground path pure* to take up power from the ground.

Third, practicing relaxed-standing fighting postures with appropriate mental guided imagery, using internal/external imaginary pairs of isometric-opposing-forces (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力), reducing internal antagonist muscular interference, re-patterning your neuromuscular system into the habit of always using your whole-body (*Zheng Li*, 整力), and merging all force components into “*one*” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一).

Fourth, building on the foundation of *whole-body connected-ness* (*Zheng Ti Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 整体连通一贯), develop harmony of action and the elastic “*spring-like force*” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) through relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换), core/torso oscillation (*Zheng Ti Gu Dang*, 整体鼓荡), and *Shi Li* (试力).

Finally, develop and cultivate *whole-body harmony* (*Zhou Shen Xie Tiao*, 周身协调) and your all-direction balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). Harmony of action is prerequisite to harmony of force.

These conditioning must be continuously refined through constant diligent practice. Developing, cultivating, and refining your *whole-body harmony* is a *work-in-process*; continual regular practice is required to maintain your skills and combat readiness. And as your neuro-physical abilities change as you advance in skill and age, this harmony must constantly be re-invented, refined, and maintained through continuous diligent training. There is no secret method.

NOTES: The steps to developing the balanced-force are: seek, aware, perceive, and understand; experience, explore, cultivate, master, and forget.

As for practical maneuvers/techniques, it is not necessary to learn them all; pick and choose whatever works best for you and practice as you feel inclined. Keep an open mind; carefully choose a selected few maneuvers; develop and master them. From one thing, you will know ten



thousand things. Simplify your selections; be more effective by being very selective; keep them simplistic. The more a maneuver/technique runs counter to your instinctive natural abilities, the more you have to think about that maneuver/technique in order to accomplish it. Thus, training a maneuver/technique that is against your instinctive natural abilities is futile because that training will fail under stress. Do what comes naturally, spontaneously, with no conscious mind-intent; remember, in an actual conflict/confrontation you must execute maneuvers under great duress and their effectiveness depend on the reactions of your opponent, which are unpredictable.

诀曰:有形有意都是假,技到无心始见奇。

Oral Tradition: Retaining form and mind-intent in fighting is false, fighting only becomes art when form-less-ness and empty-minded-ness is achieved.

We have outlined the important theories, principles, and training methods of Yiquan in this overview. We emphasize: it is important to train with qualified instructors and practicing partners.

诀曰:习拳必需得到名师的口传心授,还要悟透真髓,才有所成。

Oral Tradition: Good competent hands-on instructions and thorough comprehension of the theories and principles are absolutely essential for success in Yiquan training.

Learning involves correcting inevitable errors, and without an experienced instructor, you will ingrain bad habits. Once ingrained, these pernicious influences are very difficult to unlearn and/or fix. Practicing partners are obviously essential for push-hands and sparring. Yiquan skills are not permanent abilities, they have to be learned, they have to be cultivated continually and exercised every day.



## Chapter 2: Relaxed-Standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩)

# 站桩

“*Relaxed-standing*” (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) is “*stillness*” (*Jing*, 静) practice. It represents the foundation, entry, and most advance levels of Yiquan.

诀曰：静 为 什 么？

Oral Tradition: Why do you do stillness practice?

诀曰：静 是 为 了 更 好 地 动。

Oral Tradition: You practice stillness so you can move correctly.

“Mental attention (*mindful-ness/mind-intent*)” is the key to learning any physical skill and “*stillness*” (*Jing*, 静) practice helps to synthesize your mental attention and physical action. “*Stillness*” practice is important because, when you are *relaxed* and *still*, your mind is most susceptible to visualized suggestions (*Yi Nian You Dao*, 意念诱导) to “*look*” inwards, to “*listen*” to your body, and to “*read*” your muscles (kinesthetic perception, *Ti Ren*, 体认).

诀曰：力 应 松 整, 由 静 求 松, 由 松 求 整。

Oral Tradition: Cultivate/nurture relaxation from stillness; develop whole-body harmony from relaxation.

诀曰：真 功 夫 非 自 动 中 得 来, 须 於 不 动 中 求 之。

Oral Tradition: Real skill cannot be obtained from training of physical maneuvers and actions alone; it is acquired, developed, cultivated, and nurtured through stillness practice with mental/physical relaxation/tension exchanges to synthesize your mind-body.

诀曰:锻炼是在无力中求有力,在不动中求微动,在微动中求速动。

Oral Tradition: Training and conditioning is to learn, cultivate, and master the whole-body balanced-force by using no brute strength, to sense and perceive motionless-movement from stillness, and to acquire, develop, and cultivate speed and whole-body harmony with motionless-movement.

诀曰:站桩是求松紧谐调,整体松紧运用自如。

Oral Tradition: Stillness practice is used to achieve appropriate balance between tension and relaxation to provide whole-body harmony of action and force.

There are two categories of relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩): standing-postures-for-health (*Jian Shen Zhuang*, 健身桩) and standing-postures-for-fighting (*Ji Ji Zhuang*, 技击桩). With postures-for-health, you seek relaxation in *stillness* (*Jing Zhong Qiu Song*, 静中求松); then, on that foundation, you re-pattern your neuromuscular coordination system to use whole-body movement (*Song Zhong Qiu Zheng*, 松中求整), to eliminate localized movement (*Ju Bu Yong Li*, 局部用力). With whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调) as foundation, standing-postures-for-fighting training is used to nurture and develop your whole-body balanced-force (*Zheng Ti Hun Yuan Li*, 整体浑元力) and path-of-force-propagation (*Jing Lu*, 劲路) by the practice of kinesthetic perception (*Chuai Mo*, 揣摩) of isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Zheng Li*, 争力).

The primary training measure of relaxed-standing is visualization (*Yi Nian Huo Dong*, 意念活动). Through mentally induced perception of internal and external isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Nei Wai Zheng Li*, 内外争力), you seek, sense, feel, get to know, find out, learn, and experience the balanced-force (*Chuai Mo Yi Zhong Li*, 揣摩意中力 or simply *Mo Li*, 摸力). Another training measure is the kinesthetic perception of the pathways of force propagation of different force components passing through elements of the body to transmit the reaction forces from pushing off the ground to your hands and to merge all force components into “one” for each and every maneuver/technique (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路 or simply *Zhao Jing*, 找劲). Whole-body harmony of actions and forces (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调) is essential to “exploding” internal power as external force (*Bao Fa Wei Wai Li*, 爆发为外力). These procedures are intertwined throughout Yiquan training and conditioning. Appropriate use of “curve physical form to deliver linear force” (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直) and proper *body mechanics* of optimal alignment and connected-ness (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) are prerequisites of all Yiquan training.

In this chapter, we present the basic parallel step posture-for-health (the *Prop/Hug* posture, *Cheng Bao Zhuang*, 撑抱桩) and the small step posture-for-fighting (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩) in detail. You should start slowly and thoroughly learn these postures so you can learn others quickly. Learn what, why, and how to practice and practice what you have learned. Other relaxed-standing postures are also recorded and explained briefly for reference/guidance. Think, explore, experiment, experience, extrapolate, change, invent, and refine; from one thing you will know ten thousand things.

## Principles

Physical action is the result of relaxing and tensing of appropriate muscles, ligaments, and tendons connected to your skeletal structure. Thus, your mind, using signals through your nervous system to your muscles, ligaments, and tendons, directs all your voluntary physical actions. Your mind can and does affect the body. Neuromuscular systems can be re-wired in response to mental activity (*The Mind and the Brain* – Jeffrey Schwartz).

诀曰：神经支配一切力。

Oral Tradition: All your physical functions are directed by your mind consciously, subconsciously, and/or *un*-consciously. You can use mental processes (*Yi*, 意) to control certain physiological processes. You can use conscious visualizations to influence certain *un*-conscious physical processes.

To achieve “*peak physical performance*”, you must control your mind-body; mind and body must be in harmony, working in synch, to achieve peak performance. The transition from un-coordinated effort (no skill) to harmonized, coordinated physical skills of high perfection, is a process of training the mind-body neuromuscular system, i.e., strengthening of the mind-body connections. Your mind and your body influence each other. There are physiological manifestations of what is on your mind and psychological manifestations of what happens to you physically. Thoughts have direct powerful connections to physiological functions. This is the basic principle of auto-suggestion: *Your body responds to ideas held in your mind*. Yiquan uses this mind-body feedback loop to synthesize your mind-body into a highly coordinated, spring-like, whole-body harmony unity (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一, *Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). Through mental imaging and/or visualization conditioning you can improve your coordination and peak physical performance. By regularly repeating mental rehearsal of physical maneuvers you will improve your mental capability under stress, automatically and reliably enabling you to better perform the physical maneuvers; internalize your skills into spontaneous reflexes. This is called “*imaging*” in NLP (Neuro-Linguistic-Programming).

诀曰:心理作用於生理,生理作用於心理,交相辉映。

Oral Tradition: There are physiological manifestations of what is on your mind and psychological manifestations of what happens to you physically. Your mind and your body influence each other.

Your nerve endings, called proprioceptors, detect changes in body position, neuromuscular relaxation/tension (*Song Jin*, 松紧), internal “isometric-opposing-force-pairs” (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力), and movements from received stimuli within the body. You can “look” inwards (*Fan Guan Nei Shi*, 反观内视), “listen” to your body (*Nei Ting*, 内听), and “read” your muscles with kinesthetic perception. Practicing maneuvers/techniques with kinesthetic perception will pattern your brain, developing automatic nerve messages, called engrams, in the brain; and strengthens the mind-body connections. They help hone to perfection the body movements of your intentional physical maneuver/technique (*You Yi Yun Dong*, 有意运动), merging neuromuscular movements of your body components into “one” (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一), and integrating all force components into “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). Kinesthetic perception (*Ti Ren*, 体认) and the visualization of isometric-opposing-forces (*Zheng Li*, 争力) are the essence of relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩).

诀曰:静是为了更好地动。

Oral Tradition: Practice stillness so you can move correctly.

诀曰:提挈天地,把握阴阳,呼吸精气,独立守神,肌肉如一。

Oral Tradition: Stillness practice with mental directed activities (visualization) synthesizes and re-patterns your neuromuscular system (mind-body) as “one”.

Mental directed activity (visualization and/or imaging) is essential to integrating mind and body, and to the development and cultivation of the all-direction balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). From the relatively stationary (*still*) relaxed-standing postures, it is easier for you to program your mind-body with mental directed activities to act as a harmonized whole-body (*Zheng Ti*, 整体) and re-pattern your neuromuscular system into a new habit of using strength because your mind is most susceptible to visualized suggestions when you are relaxed and “*still*”. In particular, you must attempt to minimize/eliminate stand alone localized body movement (*Ju Bu*, 局部) and internal interference (*Gan Rao*, 干扰) associated with your normal habitual movement. Note, visualization is used to help you concentrate on self-exploration and kinesthetic perception, and there should be no mental effort (it is *effort-less*).

诀曰:由不动才能体认到四肢百骸的一动而无不动之动。

Oral Tradition: The concept of whole-body harmony and oneness, (move each body element only as part of your whole-body, never independently, all elements in your whole-body must always move in unison), can only be perceived, learned, explored, experienced, cultivated, and mastered from stillness practice.

While keeping (relatively) *still* and relaxed in standing practice (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩), you consciously practice your neuromuscular coordination and relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) to achieve whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体谐调), re-patterning your neuromuscular system into a new habit of using whole-body strength, observing, perceiving, exploring, and experiencing how moving one element implies moving all elements (hands, feet, torso, head, and mind) in unison. Whole-body *connected-ness* (*Zheng Ti Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 整体连通一贯) is the primary requisite. You must use “*visualization*” (*Yi Nian Huo Dong*, 意念活动) to explore the effects of opposites (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力) and neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchanges (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) in order to achieve whole-body coordination and harmony. Whole-body coordination and harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调) enable you to synthesize all your powers and capacities to perform an action effectively and *effortlessly*. Your mind-body works in synch and movement flows with no conscious thought or effort (*De Li*, 得力); you can do everything smoothly with *comfortable natural ease* of movement (*Shu Shi*, 舒适, *Zi Ran*, 自然), even during maximum effort; you can glide in and out of distance with a minimum of effort (*effort-less-ness*) and deliver maximum explosive power, executing maneuvers/techniques at peak performance. Learning this whole-body neuromuscular harmony is a matter of using your mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to guide the development of the connections in your neuro-pathways, and to guide the study of the internal/external isometric opposites (*Nei Wai Mao Dun*, 内外矛盾) to determine the forces imbedded in the intentional components (*Chuai Mo Yi Zhong Li*, 揣摸意中力; *Mo Li*, 摸力). The effectiveness of your physical performance depends absolutely on how your nervous system guides them, i.e., how you use mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to lead/direct/guide your action and force (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力).

诀曰: 揣 摸 意 中 力。

Oral Tradition: Perceive and feel; comprehend, explore, and experience; look inwards, listen to your body, and read your muscles to “try to figure out” for yourself the force embedded in your intentional component (mind-intent and focus concentration).

诀曰: 锻 练 是 在 无 力 中 求 有 力, 在 不 动 中 求 微 动, 在 微 动 中 求 速 动。

Oral Tradition: Training and conditioning is to learn, cultivate, and master the balanced-force by using no brute strength, to sense and perceive motionless-movement from stillness, and to acquire, develop, and cultivate speed and whole-body harmony with motionless-movement.

In addition, Yiquan uses the mind-body feedback loop in “*crisis rehearsal*” relaxed-standing exercises (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌) as a training method to manage the stress of a hand-to-hand conflict/confrontation, and to set decision-making reference points for the *un*-conscious spontaneous reflex. Relaxed-standing is an effective training method to synthesize your mental activities, physical actions, breathing, and your whole-body neuromuscular coordination for automatic reflexive response (*Fan Ying*, 反应) because your mind is most susceptible to visual suggestion when you are *relaxed* and relatively *still*. By standing relatively still in a prepared posture with appropriately selected mental directed imagery, you automatically assume the tactical mental attitude that is associated with it. Psychological and physiological training are unified in these exercises to enhance your neuromuscular coordinating system, to increase the speed of your transient reaction from maneuver to maneuver, and to reduce the lag time of your spontaneous response in a conflict.

诀曰：以形取意，以意象形，意自形生，形随意转，式随意从，力由意发。

Oral Tradition: Physical form begets mind-intent; mind-intent modifies physical form.

诀曰：神动得自有象外，意存妙在无念中。

Oral Tradition: Conjure up your visualization from your imagination, from beyond physical forms and moves. Do not be conscious of using your mind-intent and mental visualization. Visualization should be effort-less, maintained with no conscious attention.

Yiquan employs a variety of standing postures and their respective mental directed activities to train for widely different physical actions and maneuvers. In relaxed-standing, you should experience the mental and physical relaxation/tension exchange internally (*Zheng Ti Zheng Li*, 整体争力) as well as the external interaction with the surrounding, e.g., air resistance on the surface of the body (*Shen Wai Zheng Li*, 身外争力). Kinesthetic perception, the ability to “*feel*” a muscle’s relaxation and tension, to know what a muscle is doing, the awareness of position and movement of joints, is developed by consciously maintaining a posture and “getting the feel of it”. Kinesthetic perception using mentally induced opposites (*Zheng Li*, 争力) will condition the mind-body into a highly coordinated, spring-like, harmonized whole-body unity. Exercise using isometric increases muscle force rather than muscle size. In this process, slight body movements may occur; Yiquan calls these “*motion-in-stillness*” (*Jing Zhong Zhi Dong*, 静中之动). However, these movements should be minimized (internalized). Initially, when you mentally visualize doing a maneuver/technique, you may begin by actually doing it physically with very small intentional and careful external movement. Use mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to direct your movement and do not use any brute strength (*Yong Yi Bu Yong Li*, 用意不用力). Use minimum prime mover (agonist) muscle and antagonist muscle contractions to perform the action. Gradually internalize and reduce your external physical movements to “*zero*”, retaining only your mental-intent of performing the maneuver/technique. This is called the “*motionless-movement*” (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动) exercise in relaxed-standing. During training and conditioning to



develop the whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调), these very small and careful intentional movements yields large results.

诀曰:先由不动中去体会,再由微动中求认识。

Oral Tradition: First, use stillness practice to sense, perceive, explore, and experience, then use motionless-movement practice to learn, know, cultivate, and master the connected-ness, alignment, and neuromuscular coordination necessary to achieve whole-body harmony.

诀曰:由不动才能体认到四肢百骸的一动而无不动之动。

Oral Tradition: The concept of whole-body oneness, (moving each body element only as part of your whole-body, never independently, all elements in your whole-body must always move in unison), can only be perceived, learned, explored, experienced, cultivated, and mastered from stillness practice.

诀曰:初步锻炼是大动不如小动,小动不如不动,不动之动才是生生不已之动。由不动中才能体会到四肢百骸的一切。

Oral Tradition: During initial training, big movement is inferior to small movement; small movement is inferior to motionless-movement; motionless-movement is renewable and enduring.

诀曰:慢尤于快,缓胜於急。

Oral Tradition: In initial relaxed-standing training, slow action is superior to fast action.

NOTES: Relaxed-standing exercises, even without mental directed activity and without kinesthetic perception to feel, explore, and experience the mental and physical relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) of your neuromuscular system, are still beneficial as long as the *relaxation response* is invoked. However, total/absolute relaxation or slackening is “empty-standing” (*Kong Zhuang*, 空桩) while holding rigidly still in a static posture is “dead-standing” (*Si Zhuang*, 死桩).

诀曰:意在整体与内部,不要使局部破坏整体的统一。

Oral Tradition: Focus your mind-intent and attention on your whole-body and the internals; do not let “stand alone localized actions” destroy your whole-body harmony.

诀曰:一动无不动,筋肉遒欲放,支点力滚丝,螺旋力无形。

Oral Tradition: Move each body element only as part of your whole-body movement, never independently, all elements in your whole-body must always move in unison. Keep muscles and tendons in their maximum relaxed and flexible state, poised to discharge/release force. All joints act as fulcrums; deliver force with invisible natural twisting/drilling (helical spiral winding) movement.

You must practice relaxed-standing in a state of “*comfortable natural ease*” (*Shu Shi De Li*, 舒适得力). It is absolutely necessary to practice “*with no conscious effort*” (*Bu Jue Li*, 不觉力). While maintaining your posture, keep relaxed at all times, and do not be conscious of meeting the requirements of the posture. Do not use brute strength; it will introduce rigidity and stiffness into your musculature. Remember that there is no perfect posture. Do not seek or imitate total physical similarity in the postures of others; it is more important to understand the reasoning for each posture. Do not practice in front of a mirror. Using visualization, concentrate on melding the mind-intent with physical response. Maintain *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong*, 连通), optimal *alignment* (*Yi Guan*, 一贯), and keep the “*ground path pure*” to take up power from the ground (*Li Cong Di Qi*, 力从地起).

诀曰：无意无必，勿忘勿助。

Oral Tradition: There should be no mental effort. Let your mind-body work between conscious-ness and *un*-conscious-ness. Be passive, do not help or hinder your mental activities.

诀曰：意念在无心中操持。

Oral Tradition: Attempt to control and maintain your mind-intent *un*-consciously, with no conscious thought or effort.

Concentrate on self-exploration, kinesthetic perception, and neuromuscular coordination; focus your attention/concentration (mind-intent, *Yi*, 意) to guide/lead/direct your whole-body action. However, do not be overly concerned, instead of trying to achieve, pretend you already have accomplished. Keep all joints flexible with angles larger than 90 degrees; make the necessary adjustments whenever you feel uncomfortable. The ultimate goal is to enable the body to act and react naturally, with no conscious intent.

诀曰：听其自然，随时调配。

Oral Tradition: Be instinctive and natural. Practice with comfortable natural ease, with no conscious effort; make the necessary adjustments whenever you feel uncomfortable.

Relaxed-standing exercises are the essence of Yiquan. Note, “*relaxed-standing*” (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) and slow motion “*trial-and-feel*” (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercises are inseparable; when you increase the magnitude of your *motionless-movement* in your relaxed-standing exercise, you

end up with slow motion trial-and-feel exercise. To begin relaxed-standing training you must breathe naturally, relax your musculature appropriately using skeletal support, adopt the proper posture, and assume the appropriate mindset. Your mindset or mental guided imagery must be directed towards achieving mind-body synthesis.

诀曰:动即是静,静即是动,动静静动互根用。

Oral Tradition: Stillness and movement are coexisting transitional phases of an action. One phase begets the other.

诀曰:真功夫非自动中得来,须於不动中求之。

Oral Tradition: Real skill cannot be obtained from training of physical maneuvers and actions alone; it is acquired, developed, and cultivated through stillness practice.

The intended level of achievement is called *Si Ru Jing Jie* (四如境界):

|                           |       |
|---------------------------|-------|
| <i>Shen Ru Qian Guan,</i> | 身如铅灌。 |
| <i>Ti Zheng Ru Zhu,</i>   | 体整如铸。 |
| <i>Ji Rou Ru Yi,</i>      | 肌肉如一。 |
| <i>Mao Fa Ru Ji,</i>      | 毛发如戟。 |

These are the “*four touchstone states of perception*”; you should sense or perceive:

1. Proper whole-body relaxation as a thickness to the surrounding air and/or an added heaviness in your torso and limbs (*Shen Ru Qian Guan*, 身如铅灌),
2. Whole-body unity as if your body is forged in one piece (*Ti Zheng Ru Zhu*, 体整如铸), every element moves only as part of your whole-body movement,
3. Whole-body harmony as a merging of your musculature to act as one coordinated unit (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一), and
4. Honing of your nerves and senses to a high level of sensitivity as if your hairs are standing on ends, interacting with the surrounding (*Mao Fa Ru Ji*, 毛发如戟).

These four states of perception (*Si Ru*, 四如) are fundamental to Yiquan training. You should always feel these; they are mutually inclusive, existing simultaneously. Without reaching *Si Ru* (四如), *Jian Wu* (健舞) is not an art. (*Jian Wu*, however, is beyond the scope of this beginners' guide.)

The steps to developing the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) are: seek, aware, perceive, and understand; experience, explore, cultivate, master, and forget. A typical sequential outline of relaxed-standing training stages to develop the “whole-body harmony” (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调) is as follows:

1. First, learn to invoke the *relaxation response* with postures-for-health (*Jian Shen Zhuang*, 健身桩), relaxing and mildly extending your musculature and joints (*Zheng Li*, 争力) to achieve a state of *comfortable natural ease* (*Qiu Shu Zhan*, 求舒展) and mind-body relaxation (*Jing Zhong Qiu Song*, 静中求松).
2. Second, you must develop your *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) by maintaining the proper *frame* with skeletal *alignment*, perceiving isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Zheng Li*, 争力) within your own body, and extending this *connected-ness* throughout your whole-body to keep the *ground path pure* to take up power from the ground. Cultivate whole-body unity from the foundation of mind-body relaxation (*Song Zhong Qiu Zheng*, 松中求整).
3. Third, you must practice relaxed-standing fighting-postures (*Ji Ji Zhuang*, 技击桩) with the appropriate mental guided imagery using internal/external imaginary pairs of isometric-opposing-forces (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力), reducing internal antagonistic interference, and re-patterning your neuromuscular system into the habit of always using your whole-body (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动).
4. Fourth, building on the foundation of *whole-body connected-ness* (*Zheng Ti Lian Tong*, 整体连通), you must develop proper “*paths-of-force-propagation*” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路), harmony of action and the “spring-like force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) through agile mind-body relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Bian Hua*, 松紧变化).
5. Fifth, you must develop *whole-body harmony* (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调) and your all-direction balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力), merging all force components as “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). Harmony of actions is prerequisite of harmony of forces. These must be refined continuously through constant and diligent practice.

These are the three relaxed-standing milestone levels:

Level 1: To achieve comfortable natural ease of whole-body movement, *alignment*, and *connected-ness*

诀曰：以形带意，以意领力，求舒展连通。

Conforming to the principles of proper external physical forms you synthesize your mind-body with *close attention* (*Yi Xing Dai Yi*, 以形带意); use mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to guide/lead/direct your force (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力). Initially, your force guided by *Yi* (意) does not “arrive” with your focus concentration. Strive for *comfortable natural ease* of movement, *alignment*, and *connected-ness* (*Shu Zhan Lian Tong*, 舒展连通).

Level 2: To merge all force components as “one”

诀曰：以意取形，意到力到，求全身力一。

Simultaneity of mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) and force (*Li*, 力) is achieved; mind and body work in synch (*Yi Yi Qu Xing*, 以意取形). Your balanced-force “arrives” with your *focus attention* (*Yi Dao Li Dao*, 意到力到), where you think, the action and force goes. All force components merge into “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一).

Level 3: To develop whole-body harmony of action and force

诀曰：无形无意，意力不分，求整体协调。

*Form* becomes *form-less* (*Wu Xing Wu Yi*, 无形无意); actions flow with no conscious effort; your mind-intent, focus-concentration, and your balanced-force are merged into “one”, become inseparable and indistinguishable (*Yi Li Bu Fen*, 意力不分), achieving whole-body harmony unity (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调).

Performing an action *effortlessly* with perfection, with total mind-body harmony, is defined as “*in the zone*” (*De Li*, 得力). It is a state of control, mental and physical, where things seem to automatically fall into their proper places without you even realizing that you were thinking about them; your mind and body work in synch; form becomes *form-less* (*Wu Xing Wu Yi*, 无形无意); skills become spontaneous reflexes (*Zi Dong Hua*, 自动化).

诀曰：待到自动化阶段才能够谈到应用。

Oral Tradition: To be useful, all skills must become spontaneous reflexes.

But before we can proceed to explain the actual details of the methods and procedures of relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) training and conditioning to achieve these objectives, we need to further explore several aspects of visualization, relaxation/tension, mind-intent, motionless-movement, and motion-in-stillness.

## Visualization and Mental Directed Imagery (*Yi Nian Huo Dong*, 意念活动)

In seeing, the images are of external objects; in visualizing, the images, which are conjured up mentally, are internal. Visualizing is a mental activity, seeing with your mind's eye; it is a very important Yiquan training tool; it is used to manage stress, to develop neuromuscular skills, and to cultivate the combat mindset. Yiquan uses two broad visualization categories:

**Passive – Imagery or Visualization (*Jing Shen Jia Jie*, 精神假借):** You visualize a scenario and let your subconscious automatic reflexes adjust your mind-body naturally and instinctively. We simply call this imagery or visualization.

**Active – Mental Directed Imagery (*Yi Nian You Dao*, 意念诱导):** You visualize a scenario and focus your mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to induce/guide/direct your mind-body to perceive and explore your neuromuscular coordination and experience the opposites (the relaxation/tension exchange). We call this mental induced perception activity or mental directed imagery.

Since the two categories are not mutually exclusive or distinct, for simplicity, we may refer to both categories as visualization. Visualization is a vital Yiquan training tool; it is used to:

1. Synthesize your mind-body into a coordinated, harmonized, and elastic “spring-like” whole-body unity (*Bian Ti Si Tan Huang*, 遍体似弹簧). The initial step is to focus your attention on achieving whole-body relaxation (*Song Zheng*, 松整; *Shu Zhan*, 舒展), *alignment* and *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong*, 连贯相通), comfortably extending muscles and joints for increase flexibility (*Guan Jie Ling Huo*, 关节灵活), cultivating whole-body elastic “spring-like” force (*Tan Li*, 弹力) through neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换).
2. Develop and master the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力); re-pattern your neuromuscular system into a new habit of using whole-body strength (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). Achieve whole-body neuromuscular harmony of actions and forces through relaxed kinesthetic perceptive exercises (*Ti Ren*, 体认; *Zhao Jing*, 找劲), increasing muscular elasticity and transient reaction speed (*Ling Huo Bian Hua*, 灵活变化).
3. Develop and refine the combat mindset; cultivate courage. Set *un-conscious* decision-making reference points by using self-enlargement (*Zi Wo Fang Da*, 自我放大), crisis rehearsals, and mental fights with imaginary opponents (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌). Internalize your skills into spontaneous reflexes (*Zi Dong Hua*, 自动化).

## Relaxation/Tension Contradiction (*Song Jin Mao Dun*, 松紧矛盾)

Relaxation (*Song*, 松) and tension (*Jin*, 紧) are transitional phases, contradictions, opposites (*Mao Dun*, 矛盾). For Yiquan, relaxation is a conditioning method and not the goal. Total, absolute relaxation is wrong, inappropriate, and undesirable. Appropriately balancing relaxation and tension (*Song Jin Xie Tiao*, 松紧谐调) to establish neuromuscular coordination, provide whole-body harmony to move, act, and react instinctively and naturally, is the real goal. Relaxation and tension must be properly comprehended in order to develop the *balanced-force* (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力).

诀曰: 站桩是求松紧谐调, 整体松紧运用自如。

Oral Tradition: Stillness practice is used to achieve appropriate balance between tension and relaxation to provide whole-body harmony of actions and forces.

诀曰: 只松则懈, 全紧则僵。

Oral Tradition: Absolute relaxation is lax; absolute tension is rigid.

诀曰: 松则动作灵速, 紧则发力浑雄。

Oral Tradition: When you are relaxed (appropriately), movements are smooth and fast; when you are focused (tensed, hard), power releases or discharges are strong and powerful.

The mind-body must work in synch so movements “flow with no conscious effort” (*Bu Jue Li*, 不觉力). Therefore, it is essential for initial conditioning to achieve both mental and physical relaxation. Relaxation helps you to imagine the feeling of “flowing with no conscious effort”.

诀曰: 由静求松, 由松求整。

Oral Tradition: Cultivate relaxation from stillness; develop whole-body harmony from relaxation.

诀曰: 必须先学会放松, 然后再作其他意念活动。

Oral Tradition: You must master whole-body (mental and physical) relaxation before attempting any other mentally directed activities.

To acquire and experience the “*feeling of relaxation*”, try this:

Stand erect, feet shoulder width apart, knees slightly bend (do not lock your knees).

Relax your lower back, visualize you are sitting on a high stool with a string attached to

the top of your head pulling it upwards; mildly elongating your spine. Bend forward at your waist to a naturally comfortable position; let your arms hang loosely (dangle) from your shoulder. Without using any strength, relax your shoulders; swing your arms naturally effortlessly from side to side. Look inwards, listen to your body, read your muscles, let your body perceive and experience this *feeling of relaxation*.

Remember this *feeling*; you will want to reproduce it.

Relaxation is a physical state, which is controlled by the mental state. Within your body, relaxation (**Song**, 松) and tension (**Jin**, 紧) coexist and are relative to the degree of tension in the musculature. Muscles are always in a state of slight tension. When the muscles tighten up inappropriately, your speed and skill are handicapped. A low degree of tension in the prime mover muscles uses less energy; too early contraction of antagonist muscles wastes energy through internal interference. Coordination and efficient movement requires the antagonist muscles to be able to relax and lengthen readily and easily. Any excessive antagonistic tension acts as a brake, slows and weakens the action, and increases the energy cost of muscular work, resulting in early fatigue. By practicing an action with no (minimum) brute strength (**Wu Li**, 无力), no (minimum) movement (**Bu Dong**, 不动), and slow speed (**Man Dong**, 慢动), you can learn to relax the opposing (antagonistic) muscles to the extreme, minimizing internal interference, and lay the foundation for peak performance. That is why if you want to understand an action, you must take it to the extremes and examine its opposites (**Song Jin Mao Dun**, 松紧矛盾). The ability to control the impulses to the antagonist muscles, allowing them to relax and perform with minimal antagonistic tension yet retaining the ability to reverse the action or change directions (**Shun Li Ni Xing**, 顺力逆行) is known as doing the action with “comfortable natural ease of movement” (**Shu Shi, Zhi Ran, De Li**, 舒适, 自然, 得力). Tension (**Jin**, 紧) and relaxation (**Song**, 松) throughout your body must be appropriately balanced and instantly exchangeable for this peak performance.

诀曰：刚即是紧，柔即是松，实即是紧，虚即是松。松中有紧，紧中有松，松紧紧松勿过正，虚实实虚互为根。

Oral Tradition: Opposites are coexisting transitional phases; one phase begets the other. Relaxation and tension must be appropriately balanced. The insubstantial and substantial, the void and actuality, must be controlled to maintain equilibrium, balance, centered-ness, and level-ness.

In relaxed-standing practice (**Zhan Zhuang**, 站桩), visualize that you are positioning your body into a comfortable natural posture to “take a rest” with no conscious mind-intent. Do not be conscious of meeting the requirements of the posture; assume you have mastered them. Relax and let your weight pass through your skeletal structure to the ground (conversely, visualize your body as a conduit, conducting the ground to your hands and upper body). In maintaining your body posture or *frame* (**Jian Jia**, 肩架), optimum *connected-ness*, *alignment*, and equilibrium, some muscles will be in a state of slight tension. Relax and let your subconscious responses



instinctively maintain your balance and reproduce the *feeling of relaxation*. In relaxed-standing, relaxed does not mean absolutely lacking of tension, slackened, slumped down, physically lax, careless or indifferent (**Song Er Bu Xie**, 松而不懈). Indeed, there is tension within relaxation; there is relaxation within tension; one begets the other (explore and examine the opposites). The proper relaxation/tension exchange (**Song Jin Zhuan Huan**, 松紧转换) and whole-body harmony must be maintained. The relaxation desired is relaxation of the muscles and attitude; not that of attention. Beginners sometimes mistake limp-ness (physical slack-ness) with relaxed-ness and therefore slump and slacken. This is wrong.

诀曰: 松紧适度, 松而不懈, 紧而不僵。

Oral Tradition: Relax without being slack or lax; tense without being rigid or stiff.

NOTES: Keep your body up right by visualizing that the top of your head is being suspended from above while sitting on a high stool, lengthening your spine. This mental directed mild vertical stretching of the spine (the vertical opposing-force-pair, **Shang Xia Zheng Li**, 上下争力) must always be maintained for correct standing practice. This is the most important internal isometric-opposing-force-pair (**Shen Nei Zheng Li**, 身内争力); focus your mind-intent to guide this action with no strength and no effort (**Tou Xu Ling**, 头虚领; **Jiao Xia Cai**, 脚下踩).

### **Mind-Intent (Yi, 意), Visualization (Yi Nian Huo Dong, 意念活动) and Mind-body Relaxation (Song Zheng, 松整)**

Visualized suggestions play an important role in relaxation/tension exchange. The initial goal in practicing Yiquan is to synthesize your mind-body into a “spring-like”, *connected, and aligned* harmonized whole-body unit (**Zheng Ti Lian Tong**, 整体连通). The first requirement for establishing this whole-body harmony is whole-body relaxation. When the mind-body is appropriately relaxed, there should be no deliberate images in the conscious mind. In this section, we will explore how visualization (mental directed imagery) can be used to induce mind-body relaxation (**Song Zheng**, 松整).

诀曰: 必须先学会放松, 然后再作其他意念活动。

Oral Tradition: You must master whole-body (mental and physical) relaxation before attempting any other mentally directed activities.

诀曰: 反观内视, 精神意念完全寄於体内, 反覆体会全身轻松舒适的感觉。

Oral Tradition: Look inward; keep your mind-intent, attention, and concentration focused internally to sense, perceive, explore, examine, and experience the feeling of whole-body relaxation and harmony.

In Yiquan, various mental directed activities (mental directed imagery) are used to shift the mind from a state of logical, externally oriented stimuli to a state of focused attention and concentration with the conscious mind clear, pure, and holding no deliberate conscious thought. Beginners often find difficulties in allowing this mind-body relaxation (concentrating or focusing your mind on nothing in particular) to take place naturally. When you try, a continuous stream of extraneous thoughts and problems, obsessive worries, come to mind. You seem to have little control, contributing to mental stress and tension. To achieve mind-body relaxation and harmony, Yiquan suggests:

1. Adopt a passive attitude.

诀曰：无 意 无 必，勿 忘 勿 助。

Do everything *with no conscious effort* as if nothing critical is happening (*Ruo Wu Qi Shi*, 若无其事). Instead of trying to achieve mind-body relaxation and harmony, pretend you have already mastered this relaxation. Do not help or hinder your effort.

2. Do not attempt to resist or retain any thoughts.

诀曰：来 者 不 拒，去 者 不 留。

Let your thoughts come and go naturally. Let uninvited distractions pass through your consciousness. Do not retain or resent your inner dialogue. Blocking a stressful thought (obsessive worry or negative thought) drives it deeper into your memory. Instead, to avoid stressful thoughts, direct the mind towards happy relaxing thoughts to facilitate relaxation. This is the “*principle of replacement*”, i.e., you replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts; think of something better instead. You move towards whatever you focus your attention on.

3. Mentally perform self-examination and self-exploration.

诀曰：听 其 自 然，随 时 调 配。

Starting from your head downwards, mentally check to see if each and every body part is relaxed and comfortable; try to feel the sensation of relaxation. If not, tense the respective part slightly, and then relax and release it to achieve natural relaxation. Make any adjustments as necessary to be relaxed and comfortable.

4. Use visualized suggestions (*Jing Shen Jia Jie*, 精神假借) to help you relax.

Your body responds to ideas in your mind; the more you think about something, you strengthen its feeling. You can program your bio-computer with focused attention on mental imagery; you strengthen a feeling every time you think it.

Examples of visualizations (*Jing Shen Jia Jie*, 精神假借) that can help you relax are:

- a. Your skin is very sensitive and is linked to your brain. Relaxing your skin contributes to mind-body relaxation. Visualize standing completely relaxed under a warm shower adjusted to a comfortable temperature. Feel the water running from head to toe relaxing your whole body. Or
- b. Visualize standing in a cool breeze. The comfortable air movement relaxes every inch of your body. Or
- c. Visualize floating face up in a warm bath, comfortably enjoying and relaxing in the water. Or
- d. Visualize standing in shoulder deep water in a swimming pool, your body's weight buoyed by the water.

Or you may select any mental image (*Jing Shen Jia Jie*, 精神假借) that you have actually experienced and are comfortable with. There should be *no mental effort* in creating mental images or in concentrating on self-exploration and self-examination of your body. Mental visualization must be realistic, something you have experienced.

Visual imagery is closer to direct experience than verbal thought; you re-live the experience. Be patient and persistent in using (passive) mental visualization to achieve the *relaxation response*. Choose one mental image (visualization) and give the process time to develop to maturity. Be passive. Practice with *comfort natural ease* (*Shu Shi Zi Ran*, 舒适自然). If you cannot achieve a relaxed state after careful practice with one visualization scenario, try another. The correct sequence of using any mental imaging or visualization to achieve mind-body relaxation (*Song Zheng*, 松整) is as follows:

1. Visualize something you have actually experienced. Mental imaging must be realistic. Self-explore, self-examine, and let your neuromuscular system perceive and “*feel*” the experience as if it is real (*Ti Ren*, 体认). “Listen” to your body, “read” your muscles. In this case, instead of trying to achieve, pretend you have already accomplished the mind-body relaxation.
2. When your body has the *feeling*, e.g., you are relaxed mentally and physically, feeling good, you need not continue to visualize or be conscious of the visual

imagery. It is best to use visualization with no conscious effort (*Yi Cun Miao Zai Wu Nian Zhong*, 意存妙在无念中).

3. Now, let that relaxed *feeling* flow through your whole-body permeating all your actions; *feel* the relax sensation.
4. Relegate to your subconscious mind the exploration and examination of how your body feels the changes and becomes aware of your whole-body harmony with your conscious mind holding no deliberate thought. Instead of “making your body work” you *let* your body “do the proper thing naturally and instinctively” to establish *un*-conscious references. Do not focus on your lower abdomen (*Dan Tian*, 丹田), on a sound, or on your breathing as in some meditation.
5. When you lose the *feeling*, resume your visualization.

诀曰：意念在无心中操持，须在有意与无意之间。

Oral Tradition: Attempt to control and maintain your mind-intent *un*-consciously, with no conscious thought or effort.

## Methods and Procedures

Start to learn *Zhan Zhuang* (站桩) by practicing postures-for-health (*Jian Shen Zhuang*, 健身桩) to develop mind-body relaxation (*Jing Zhong Qiu Song*, 静中求松).

诀曰：站桩是求松紧谐调，整体松紧运用自如。

诀曰：松则动作灵速，紧则力发雄浑。

Choose a place and time such that you will not be disturbed for the duration of your intended practice. Take preliminary precautions: Perform warm-up and stretch exercises. Empty your mind and position your body into a selected posture (e.g., *Cheng Bao Zhuang*, 撑抱桩). Keep your “body and mind” relaxed and maintain this posture (*frame*) until you lose concentration. Make appropriate adjustments as necessary to always be at *comfortable natural ease*. Use visualization to help you relax and reproduce the *feeling of relaxation*. We again emphasize, during relaxed-standing practice to evoke the *relaxation response*, remember to:

1. Deeply relax your mind-body.

诀曰：筋肉收敛而舒放，骨骼支撑，关节灵活，气力均整。

Align your skeletal structure to support your body weight and to maintain your posture. Visualize your muscles “hanging” onto your skeleton. Keep all your muscles flexible and relaxed and all your joints larger than 90 degrees. Let your weight pass through your optimally *aligned* and *connected* body to your feet, keeping the “*ground path pure*” (see Mike Sigman) to take up power from the ground.

2. Breathe with natural ease.

诀曰：呼吸纯任自然。

Do not pay conscious attention to your breathing; do not hold or lengthen your breath.

3. Use mental visualization and pay *close attention*.

诀曰：精神意念高度集中。

Use mental guided imagery to help you to attain a state of focused concentration of attention, a tranquil state in your mind-body.

诀曰：松而不懈，紧而不僵。

Here, relaxed does not mean slackened, limped or physically lax. You still need to maintain optimal body *alignment*, proper *connected-ness* and *frame* (posture) in a natural, coordinated whole-body relaxed state. The relaxation desired is relaxation of the muscles and attitude, not of attention and awareness. Focus your mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to lead/guide/direct you.

The following are basic components that are helpful to invoking the *relaxation response*:

1. A quiet environment: Initially you should separate yourself from distracting external stimuli. It contributes to the effectiveness of eliminating distracting thoughts (negative mental distractions).
2. Mental directed activity (guided imagery): This is a device used to shift the mind from extraneous externally oriented thoughts (obsessive worries) to find a quiet mental space, to focus your mind-body on the present. Empty your mind and focus your gaze at an imaginary distant object, e.g., an imaginary bird at a distant cloud in a calm blue sky. Try to “see” the color blue; it is relaxing.
3. A passive attitude: You should not worry about how well you are performing. Adopt a “let it happen attitude” and permit relaxation to occur at its own pace between conscious-ness and *un-conscious-ness*, be simultaneously mindful and

detached. Do not be conscious of meeting the requirements of the posture. Instead of trying to achieve, pretend you have already accomplished the mind-body relaxation state.

4. A comfortable posture with no undue muscular tension: While maintaining your posture (*Jian Jia*, 肩架) with skeletal support, deeply relax all your muscles, beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face or vice versa. Here you must rely on self-examination and self-exploration; look inwards (反观内视), listen to your body (内听), and read your muscles (体察); observe and learn from experience. You can become aware of the difference between relaxation and tension in your body by tensing a muscle and then letting it relax. This technique is called “*progressive relaxation*”. In order to remain relaxed, internally and externally, you must be relaxed mentally. Use passive mental imaging (*Jing Shen Jia Jie*, 精神假借) to create a tranquil state in your mind to promote relaxation of your body. For example: visualize floating comfortably in a pool of soothing warm water.
5. Breathe easily and naturally through your nose without paying conscious attention to inhalation and exhalation. In particular do not attempt to lengthen or hold your breath.

诀曰: 锻炼时有忌对镜操作之戒, 恐流於形似而神不真。

NOTES: Do not practice in front of a mirror to check for “correct external form”. Paying too much attention to “correct external form” will make you lose your concentration of attention. Grasp the *Yi* (意) by focusing your concentration on the appropriate visualized suggestion and the appropriate external form must follow. Do not be conscious of meeting all the specifics of the requirements. Instead of trying to achieve, pretend you have already accomplished. The above discussion applies to all relaxed-standing training.

Now we will present the practice of the basic parallel-step *Prop/hug* posture-for-health (*Cheng Bao Zhuang*, 撑抱桩) and the small-step posture-for-fighting (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩) in detail. Other relaxed-standing postures are also explained briefly for reference and guidance.

## Standing-Postures-for-Health (*Jian Shen Zhuang*, 健身桩)

There are four basic categories of postures-for-improving-health: standing, sitting, lying-down and walking. The fastest method to obtain beneficial results is standing. These are called *standing-postures-for-health*. Because most of your daily activities contribute to mental and physical tension (stress), by invoking the *relaxation response* in relaxed-standing, you provide

your mind and body with needed recuperation. Your blood circulates much more freely when you are relaxed. Therefore, relaxed-standing practice improves your health as it restores and builds up your “internal strength”.

As stated, the initial objectives of standing-postures-for-health are to learn to invoke the *relaxation response* (*Jing Zhong Qiu Song*, 静中求松), to develop whole-body optimal *alignment* and *connected-ness* (*Qiu Shu Zhan Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 求舒展连通一贯), and whole-body harmony (*Song Zhong Qiu Zheng*, 松中求整).

诀曰: 必须先学会放松, 然后再作其他意念活动。

Oral Tradition: You must master whole-body (mental and physical) relaxation before attempting any other mentally directed activities.

This is most easily accomplished with the basic parallel-step “*Prop/hug*” standing posture (*Cheng Bao Zhuang*, 撑抱桩). Practice neuromuscular coordination skill with this posture to acquire relaxation in these steps:

1. Let your body perceive, acquire, and experience the *feeling of relaxation*.
2. Practice to reproduce the *feeling of relaxation* at will.
3. Practice to be able to voluntarily reproduce the *feeling of relaxation* under stress.

Let your body achieve this harmonized whole-body relaxed state sub-consciously by adopting optimal musculoskeletal *alignment*, proper *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong*, 连通), appropriate muscular relaxation/tension, and flexibility at all your joints (*Guan Jie Ling Huo*, 关节灵活).

## The Basic Parallel-Step *Prop/hug* Posture (*Cheng Bao Zhuang*, 撑抱桩)

The basic parallel-step “*Prop/hug*” standing posture (*Cheng Bao Zhuang*, 撑抱桩) is the quintessential relaxed-standing exercise of Yiquan (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩). This exercise brings you to a state of coordinated relaxed alertness through optimal musculoskeletal *alignment* and proper *connected-ness*. Even advanced students should devote time to this. Extraordinary achievement comes from ordinary mundane practice performed with persistent dedication.

诀曰: 横撑竖抱, 撑三抱七。

Stand erect; feet shoulder width apart; outside edges of feet approximately parallel. Do not put “too much” weight on your heels because that will reduce the “spring-like condition” (*Tan Xing*, 弹性) in your legs. Keep your spine erect and imagine a string attached to and pulling the top of your head upwards; feel like slightly pushing up with your head (*Tou Xu Ling*, 头虚领). Bend

the knees slightly (not straight and not locked, between 90 and 180 degrees); visualize holding a balloon between your knees. Imagine applying inward pressure below your knees and outward pressure above your knees (*Xiang Lian Xiang Zheng*, 相连相争). Relax the lower back thus allowing the pelvis to roll very slightly forward, filling out the small of the back as if you are sitting on a high stool (腰脊骨垂线成直). Visualize imaginary springs connecting your feet to your head; mildly stretch these imaginary springs (*Tou Xu Ling*, 头虚领; *Jiao Xia Cai*, 脚下踩).

Keeping your shoulders down and relaxed, lift your hands up to shoulder level without disturbing your shoulders. Form a circle with your arms; hands higher than your elbows, keep hands a few inches apart, approximately a foot from (in front of) your chest; palms facing your face. *Prop* your elbows out to your sides slightly below the level of the shoulders as if holding balloons under your upper arms. Direct your primary intent to *hugging-in* and secondary intent to *propping-open* (i.e., more closing intent, 70%, than propping intent, 30%, *Cheng San Bao Qi*, 撑三抱七). Imagine holding a lightweight fragile paper balloon between your arms and chest. Applying too much force will crush this balloon; not enough force will result in dropping it (*Heng Cheng Shu Bao*, 横撑竖抱). Keep your fingers apart and slightly bend; imagine holding cotton balls between your fingers. Direct these actions with your mind-intent (*Yi*, 意); do not use any brute strength. Keep all joints relaxed and flexible (*Guan Jie Ling Huo*, 关节灵活). Keep the angles of the joints between 90 to 180 degrees.

诀曰：静听微雨，默对长空。

The head and neck should be held erect (stand tall, *Tou Zheng Ding Ping*, 头正项平), tuck-in the chin slightly as if holding a small balloon between it and the neck. Imagine a string attached to and pulling the top of your head upwards. Relax the facial muscles; almost smile. Lightly touch the teeth together. Allow the tongue to lie naturally; do not be concerned with it touching any particular place in the mouth. Part the mouth slightly. Breathe naturally; specifically do not pay attention to inhaling or exhaling; do not hold or lengthen your breath. Direct your eyes to a distant object; imagine looking through a light fog at birds flying near a distant cloud. See the imaginary “blue” sky (默对长空). Stay alert; listen passively as you would to the sound of falling rain (静听微雨).

诀曰：上有绳吊系，下有木支撑。

Oral Tradition: Visualize a rope attached to the top of your head mildly pulling it upwards while your legs are supported with braces.

It is important to keep the shoulders down and relaxed; shoulders level (*Jian Ping*, 肩平) means your shoulders should not be affected (rise up) when you lift your arms up to *hug* the imaginary balloon. Visualize imaginary springs connecting your wrists and your wrists to your neck. Imagine holding small balloons in the armpits. The feet should be flat on the ground with not



much weight on your heels, feet level (*Jiao Ping*, 脚平), with your weight distributed equally between them, centered in your base (*Zhong Ping*, 中平). All body joints maintain a bend between 90 and 180 degrees (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直). Align your musculoskeletal structure to maintain your posture, supporting your weight, and relax all your muscles. Visualize “hanging” your muscles on your skeletal structure.

诀曰:要内外放松,身躯挺拔,腰脊骨垂线成直,浑身大小关节,都含着似曲非直意。

Oral Tradition: Relax internally/externally, mentally/physically. Stand erect with your spine neutrally straight, all other body joints being slightly bent or not straight.

NOTES: Except for variations in hand and arm positions, these requirements are similar for all relaxed-standing-postures-for-health. However, once acquired, you should not be conscious of these requirements. Instead of trying to consciously maintain and conform to the specifics, pretend you have already satisfied all these requirements.

诀曰:意念须在有意与无意之间,在无心中操持。

Oral Tradition: Attempt to control and maintain your mind-intent *un*-consciously, with no conscious thought or effort.

Initially, when practicing parallel-step *Prop/hug* standing posture (*Cheng Bao Zhuang*, 撑抱桩) you should visualize hugging an imaginary fragile lightweight paper balloon to perceive the relaxation of your muscles and the mild hyper-extension of all your joints to achieve a *comfortable natural ease* in using strength (*Shu Zhan, Zi Ran, De Li*, 舒展, 自然, 得力). Remember the *feeling of relaxation* described/attained in previous sections; try to “feel” the same experience and sensation. You may experience the sensation of relaxation as tingling, warmth, coolness, or heaviness (*Shen Ru Qian Guan*, 身如铅灌). When you have acquired the *feeling of relaxation*, practice reproducing this feeling at will and let it permeate your whole-body, (especially in tension creating situations).

Next, visualize hugging an imaginary medium weight wooden ball to perceive the vertical isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力) to nurture/cultivate/achieve upper and lower body *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong*, 连通; *Zheng*, 整). Then, visualize hugging an imaginary heavy weight steel ball to perceive and strengthen (*Qiang Hua*, 强化) the “path-of-force-propagation” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路) for the *transmission* of force through the “ground-path”; you develop whole-body *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯). When you have merged your mind-body into a harmonious inseparable whole-body, you would “feel” as if your body is forged in one piece (*Ti Zheng Ru Zhu*, 体整如铸).

NOTES: Maintain a relaxed-standing posture until you lose concentration. Stop when you lose concentration; this is not an endurance exercise. Do not skip this exercise because it seems too easy. This exercise represents the foundation for all subsequent Yiquan training. Remember:

诀曰: 锻炼是在无力中求有力, 在不动中求微动, 在微动中求速动。

Oral Tradition: Training and conditioning is to learn and master the balanced-force from using no brute strength, to sense and perceive motionless-movement from stillness, and to acquire, develop, and cultivate speed and whole-body harmony with motionless-movement.

Yiquan is built on the foundation of attaining the “*four states of perception*” (*Si Ru Jing Jie*, 四如境界).

### **Motion-in-stillness (*Jing Zhong Zhi Dong*, 静中之动) and Motionless-movement (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动)**

The next objective of standing-postures-for-health is to develop your mind-body into an elastic spring-like harmonized whole-body unity (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体谐调). Having mastered relaxation, with your body elements optimally *aligned* and properly *connected*, you must learn to “*take up power from the ground*” by “*manipulate the ground path*” from your feet to your “*contact points*” (*Li Dian*, 力点), employing coordinated harmonized whole-body movement (*Dong Zuo Xie Tiao*, 动作谐调) to “*transmit*” the reaction forces from pushing off the ground, through appropriate “*path-of-force-propagation*” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路), to the contact points. This re-education of the mind-body to re-pattern your neuromuscular system into a new way of always using “whole-body movement” (*Zheng*, 整) in a comfortable natural way is accomplished through “*motionless-movement*” (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动) exercises. *Using the ground* with whole-body harmony of movement (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体谐调) is the foundation to develop and cultivate the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) and to suddenly and explosively discharge/release power (*Bao Fa Li*, 爆发力) with no conscious effort (*Bu Jue Li Zhi Li*, 不觉力之力).

诀曰: 浑身气力匀整, 全身力一。

Oral Tradition: Whole-body harmony of action and force is required to merge all the different force components as “one”.

诀曰: 独立守神, 肌肉如一。

Oral Tradition: Stillness practice with mental directed activities synthesizes your mind-body and neuromuscular system as “one”.

Specifically, any one element/component of your body must only move as part of your whole-body movement, always moving every part of your body (hands, feet, torso and mind) automatically in unison.

诀曰：一 动 无 不 动，遍 体 似 弹 簧。

Oral Tradition: Every body element moves only as part of your coordinated whole-body movement, never independently, all parts moving simultaneously in harmony. Every body element/component behaves as if it is an elastic coiled spring, poised to strike out.

You start to develop coordinated harmonized whole-body movement (*Dong Zuo Xie Tiao*, 动作协调) by practicing slow large “motion-in-stillness” (*Jing Zhong Zhi Dong*, 静中之动). That is, while in relaxed-standing, you mentally induced your whole-body to “move against” certain imaginary resistance; this is called “kinesthetically meeting the resistance” (*Ti Cha Zu Li*, 体察阻力). Ideally, as soon as you visualize moving in one direction, you would *feel* it is *impossible* to move and that you must stop (be still) and immediately visualize moving in another direction. Initially, your mental visualization, attention, mind-intent, and awareness should be focused on the internal opposites (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力); and then gradually you would extend them to cover interaction with the external surrounding (*Shen Wai Zheng Li*, 身外争力). The resulting neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) causes cyclical musculoskeletal movement (contraction/extension oscillations, *Gu Dang*, 鼓荡) of your whole-body, e.g.,

|                      |   |     |
|----------------------|---|-----|
| movement/tension     | — | 动/紧 |
| stillness/relaxation | — | 静/松 |
| movement/tension     | — | 动/紧 |
| stillness/relaxation | — | 静/松 |
| .....                |   |     |

As your training advances, you should gradually reduce the movement cycle’s “amplitude” to be smaller and smaller (*Da Dong Bu Ru Xiao Dong*, 大动不如小动), and eventually to nil (*Xiao Dong Bu Ru Bu Dong*, 小动不如不动), arriving at the “motionless-movement” (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动). You would naturally increase the “oscillation frequency” as you decrease the amplitude. Relatively rapid oscillation frequency is required to develop the elastic “spring-like force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力). You cannot acquire the “spring-like force” by doing large slow-motion movement exercises. You must use “small amplitude and high frequency” mentally induced “motionless-movement” (不动之动才是生生不已之动) whole-body “relaxation/tension exchange” exercises to develop/cultivate the “balanced-force” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力).

## Examples:

### 1. Rocking or Oscillating Forward/Backward (*Tun Tu*, 吞吐; *Fu Chen*, 浮沉; *Kai He*, 开合)

Visualize standing in the aforementioned parallel-step “*Prop/hug*” standing posture (*Cheng Bao Zhuang*, 撑抱桩) in shoulder deep water with your forearms resting on a floating log.

First imagine the water flows in from your back, pushing on your body. Shift your weight to your rear to meet this force, stretch your spine (uncoiling your back to stretch the imaginary springs connecting your feet to your head) and use a whole-body effort to lift the imaginary log slightly, your arms moving upward, backward, and outward (*Fu*, 浮). Do not lean backwards; keep your toes on the ground while spreading the imaginary spring between your knees and your wrists with invisible outward twisting/*drilling* (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋). All joints should flex slightly. Do not lift you palm out of the imaginary water surface.

Then imagine the water flows in from your front, pushing on your body. Shift your weight forward to meet this force, compress your spine (coil your back compressing the imaginary springs connecting your feet to your head), sink down your whole-body and press the log into the water, your arms moving downward, forward, and inward (*Chen*, 沉). Keep your heels on the ground, “*drill*” your feet downwards with inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) while squeezing the imaginary spring between your knees and your wrists together slightly. Flex every joint slightly. Do not submerge the top of your hand below the imaginary water surface.

Initially, you should do this forward/backward oscillation (*Gu Dang*, 鼓荡) slowly and evenly; feel the drag of the water on your entire body as you rock forwards and backwards. Feel every joint (ankle, knee, hip, spine, shoulder, elbow and wrist) moving (opening and closing) slightly. Once you have a feel of your body movement, minimize and internalize your movement; then your motion becomes *motionless-movement*. Visualize doing this exercise with no physical movement and no brute strength; focus your mind-intent to guide your action yet do not be conscious of your visualization. Eventually, whether the water is moving you or you are moving the water becomes fuzzy.

NOTES: Alternatively, you may do *motionless-movement* by moving backward, downward, and outward (*Tun*, 吞) while slightly twisting/*drilling* your knees outward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), then immediately go forward, upward, and inward (*Tu*, 吐) while twisting/*drilling* your knees inward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) in this oscillation exercise. Also, you may go downward, backward, twisting your knees outward while mentally twisting forearms to palms facing upwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) and squeezing arms inward (*He*, 合); then go upward, forward, twisting knees inward while mentally twisting forearms to palms facing downwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) and pulling arms apart outward (*Kai*, 开). (This is the basic lateral strike – *Ce Pi*, 侧劈.) By including invisible “*drilling*” of your legs and “*twisting*” of your arms (支点力滚丝) into all your *motionless-movement*, spiral/helical components (*Duo Mian Luo*

*Xuan*, 多面螺旋) are integrated into your whole-body movement (*Luo Xuan Li Wu Xing*, 螺旋力无形). You must not isolate your movement into components and/or limit your movement to a single dimension.

诀曰：一 动 全 身 转, 多 面 螺 旋。

Oral Tradition: Natural spiral movement, drilling of the legs, turning of the waist, twisting of the arms, must be integrated into every movement.

## 2. Swaying/Waving Lateral Sideways (*Yao Fa*, 摇法)

Visualize standing in the aforementioned basic parallel-step *Prop/hug* standing posture (*Cheng Bao Zhuang*, 撑抱桩) in shoulder deep water.

First imagine the water flows in from your right front and pushes on your body; shifting your weight to 30% on your left leg and 70% on your right leg, shift your weight to your right front to meet this force. Feel the opposing-force-pair extending from your left foot (ground) to your head. Squeeze the imaginary spring between your knees together slightly. Push your hands forward, inward, downward and slightly to your left. Your right hand must not cross over your central line to your left.

Then imagine the water flows in from your right rear and pushes on your body; shift your weight to your right rear to meet this force. Feel the opposing-force-pair extending from your left foot (ground) to your head. Spread the imaginary spring between your knees slightly. Pull your hands backward, outward, and upward.

Now imagine the water flows in from your left rear and pushes on your body; shifting your weight to 30% on your right leg and 70% on your left leg, shift your weight to your left rear to meet this force. Feel the opposing-force-pair extending from your right foot (ground) to your head. Spread your knees slightly. Pull your hands backward, outward, and upward.

Then imagine the water flows in from your left front and pushes on your body; shift your weight to your left front to meet this force. Feel the opposing-force-pair extending from your right foot (ground) to your head. Squeeze your knees together slightly. Push your hands forward, inward, downward and slightly to your right. Your left hand must not cross over the central line to your right.

Your body “sways” slightly in a shallow U-pattern with the long axis in the lateral (left/right) direction. Remember to alternately pushing off with each leg, i.e., “drilling” each leg into the ground as you sway from side-to-side; do not lean backwards. Initially, do this swaying (*Dong Dang*, 动荡) slowly and evenly; feel the drag of the water on your entire body as you sway left and right. Once you have a feel of your body movement, minimize and internalize your physical

movement. Make your motion become motionless-movement. Visualize, do this exercise with no physical movement and no strength, focus your mind-intent to guide your action.

### 3. Rotating (*Xuan Fa*, 旋法)

Visualize standing in the basic parallel-step *Prop/hug* standing posture (*Cheng Bao Zhuang*, 撑抱桩) in shoulder deep water with your forearms resting on a large floating ball.

First imagine the water flows in from your left rear, move your body left rear to meet this pressure while pushing and rotating the floating ball to your right rear (move both hands in sync); your left hand must not cross over the central line to your right. Next imagine the water flows in from your right rear, move your body right to meet this pressure while pushing and rotating the floating ball to your left; your right hand must not cross over the central line to your left. Next imagine water flows in from the front, move your body and push the floating ball forward to meet this pressure. Feel the opposing-force-pair (*Zheng Li*, 争力) extending from your foot to your head. Thus, your body rotates counter-clockwise (while hands move clockwise) with your spine as the axis in an elliptical pattern with its long axis in the forward/backward direction. Here your center of gravity moves more from front to back than in “swaying” (*Yao Fa*, 摇法). Initiate every rotation by “drilling” with your legs into the ground to turn your waist and torso; coordinate your whole-body to rotate as one unit. To rotate your body counter-clockwise, twist your right knee slightly inward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) while *drilling* your left leg counter-clockwise (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), your body weight shifting to your left slightly backwards; next, twist your right knee slightly outwards while pushing off with the ball of your left foot, body weight shift onto your right leg. Next, *drill* and squeeze both knees together while shifting weight forward. (Reverse these motions for clockwise turn.) Initially, do this slowly and evenly; feel the imaginary water drag on your entire body. After doing a few counter-clockwise rotations, do a few clockwise rotations. Once you have a feel of your body movement, minimize and internalize your movement, make the motion become motionless-movement. Visualize, do this exercise with no physical movement and no strength, focus your mind-intent to guide your action.

Mentally perform these neuromuscular exercises, coordinating each part of your body to move in whole-body unison (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动). Keep relaxed and minimize the actual movement (beginners may employ very, very small intentional and careful external physical movement). Seeking the slightest movement (*Wei Dong*, 微动) from a stationary relaxed-standing posture (stillness) and feeling for the interaction of the external air resistance on your body is essential to sensing and building up your balanced-force. Concentrate on self-exploration and kinesthetic experience (*Ti Cha*, 体察) of how your body feels the changes. Become aware of the kinesthetic perception of the whole-body harmony unity.

诀曰：先由不动中去体会，再由微动中求认识。

Oral Tradition: First, use stillness practice to sense, perceive, and experience, then use motionless-movement practice to learn, know, cultivate, and master the musculoskeletal connected-ness and alignment, and the neuromuscular coordination necessary to achieve whole-body harmony.

The same neurological pathways are excited by visualizing an action in a “*motionless-movement*” exercise as if physically doing the action. Perform these exercises with “*comfortable natural ease*”; make adjustment as necessary when you do not feel naturally at ease. Learn to trust your mind-body feedback to remember the correct whole-body response. Practice as you inclined, let it work at a level below conscious-ness; do not hinder it with conscious effort. Let it work with no conscious effort rather than make it work. Relegate your whole-body action to your subconscious mind through proper training and learn through your experience.

诀曰:力量在身外去求取,意念在无心中操持。

Oral Tradition: Seek your balanced-force from the interactions with the surrounding. Attempt to control and maintain your visualization (imagery) with your *un*-conscious mind.

诀曰:力应松整,静松中求,缓运中解。

Oral Tradition: Whole-body balanced-force is cultivated from “relaxed stillness” practice and is developed through slow-motion “trial-and-feel” training.

诀曰:离开己身,无物可求,执着己身,永无是处。

Oral Tradition: There is nothing to gain outside of your own body. It is also wrong to be too conscious of your own body. Instead of trying to achieve, pretend you have already accomplished.

## Other Postures-for-Health

When you have mastered the basic parallel-step *Prop/hug* standing posture (*Cheng Bao Zhuang*, 撑抱桩), you would have learned the rudiments of Yiquan. However, there are many other standing-postures-for-health. Most are variations from the basic parallel-step posture and you can also perform the rocking, swaying, and rotating exercises from these postures. In this section, some postures are explained briefly for reference/guidance

## Down/Press Parallel-Step Posture (*Fu Bao Zhuang*, 俯抱桩)

From the basic parallel-step posture, rotate your forearms to palms facing down.

Visualize standing in waist deep water, hands and forearms resting on top of a large floating ball. Imagine the water flows in from your front; slightly shift your weight forward to meet this pressure. As you shift your weight forward, press downward, inward, and forward (slightly) on this floating ball. Mentally coil your back and squeeze the imaginary balloon between your knees, *drilling* your knees inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) as you “sink” down (*Chen*, 沉). Then imagine the water flows in towards your back; slightly shift your weight backward while the water behind you providing support. As you shift backward, release the downward pressure; allow your body to “float” upward uncoiling your back (*Fu*, 浮), twist your knees outward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋). Lift the ball slightly upward, backward and outward. Use mind-intent to rock/oscillate your whole body back and forth; do this “*motionless-movement*” without using any strength. The emphasis of this posture is on sensing, perceiving, and kinesthetically experiencing the force in the up/down direction.

## Forward/Upward Push/Lift Parallel-Step Posture (*Tui Tuo Zhuang*, 推托桩)

From the basic parallel-step posture, raise hands to eyebrow level; rotate forearms to palms facing forward and upward. Visualize small imaginary springs connecting your right index finger to your left eyebrow (side near the nose) and connecting your left index finger to your right eyebrow (*Er Zhi Gou Mei*, 二指勾眉).

Visualize standing in waist deep water and holding a large paper balloon in a breeze. Use enough force to hold onto to the wiggling balloon; too much force will crush it; too little and it floats away. Use mind-intent; do not use any brute (localize) strength. Imagine the water flows in towards your back pushing you slightly. As you shift backward to meet this pressure, sink downward and open your knees (coiling your back) while pulling your hands outward, backward and downward. Then imagine the water flows in from your front, pushing you slightly. Simultaneously uncoil your back (stretching the imaginary springs between your head and your feet), squeezing your knees slightly and push the balloon upward, forward and inward. Use mind-intent to direct this *motionless-movement*. Do not use any strength. This posture emphasizes sensing, perceiving, and experiencing the force in the forward/backward direction.

## Lift/Stab Parallel-Step Posture (*Ti Cha Zhuang*, 提插桩)

From the basic parallel-step posture, lower your hands to your sides; keep your elbows propped outward and slightly bend, and mentally pull them upwards while stabbing your fingers into the ground (*Shun Li Ni Xing*, 顺力逆行). Visualize holding balloons under your armpits, and imaginary springs connecting your wrists to your neck and connecting your fingers to the



ground. Visualize standing in waist deep water. As the water flow shifts your weight slightly backwards, pull your forearms upwards at the elbow (upward, backward and outward) while extending the imaginary spring between your knees with outward twisting. Grab the ground with your toes; do not lift toes off the ground. Then imagine the water flow shifts your weight forward, sink and stab your fingers into the ground downward, forward and inward while compressing the imaginary spring between your knees with inward twisting. Do not lift heels off the ground. Keep your shoulders relaxed; do not move your hands in front of your toes. Do and direct this "*motionless-movement*" with mind-intent; do not use brute strength. Minimize your motion but do not keep absolutely *still*. You will feel your hands naturally "get heavy" in this posture (*Shen Ru Qian Guan*, 身如铅灌). This posture is used to sense and experience primarily the up/down forces.

### Horizontal Push/Pull Parallel-Step Posture (*Fu An Zhuang*, 扶按桩)

From the basic parallel-step posture, lower your hands in front of your body (about a foot to the front) below your shoulder and above your navel level, at hip's width apart. Rotate your forearms to palms facing down, fingers pointing forward. Use these directed mental activities with this posture to:

1. **Sense vertical (up/down) forces.** Visualize standing in waist deep water; hands on top of a floating log. As the water flows in from the front, shift your weight forward to meet it; press down on the floating log as if lifting yourself upwards; compress the imaginary spring between your knees. As the water flows in from your back, shift your weight backward to meet it, release the downward press (lift the log upwards slightly), stretch the imaginary springs between your knees, sinking your body downwards; do not lean backwards. Do not put much weight on your heels; visualize you are holding an ant under each heel. Stepping down will kill the ants; lifting your heels will let them run away. Keep your heels on the ground while your weight shifts upward/forward and downward/backward.
2. **Sense forward/backward forces.** Visualize standing in waist deep water; hands and forearms on top of a floating log. Visualize springs attached from each of your fingertips to the wall in front. As the water flows in from your back shift your weight backward to meet it, sink your body downward (do not lean backwards), stretching the imaginary spring between your knees and pull the imaginary springs to the front wall and the log backward, downward and outward. As the water flows from the front, shift your weight forward to meet it, compress the imaginary springs towards the front wall and between your knees and push the log forward, upward and inward (lift the log upwards). Sense the forward/backward force.

Do these *motionless-movement* exercises with mind-intent and with no brute strength (*Yong Yi Bu Yong Li*, 用意不用力), with no localized movement.

## Lift/Hug Parallel-Step Posture (*Ti Bao Zhuang*, 提抱桩)

From the basic parallel-step posture, lower your hands in front of your body (about a foot to the front) to your navel level, at hip's width apart. Rotate forearms to palms facing up, left hand fingers pointing right, right hand fingers point left. Prop elbows out (visualize balloons under your armpits). Visualize lifting and hugging a large balloon, imaginary springs connecting your wrists to your neck and connecting your fingers to the corresponding fingers of the opposite hand.

Visualize standing in waist deep water with your arms lifting and hugging a floating balloon. First imagine the water flows in from your rear, move your body to your rear to meet this force. As your weight shifts to your rear, stretch the imaginary spring between your knees, stretch your spine, and use whole-body effort to lift up the balloon slightly while pulling your arms apart (open, *Kai*, 开). Do not lift your toes off the ground. Then imagine the water flows in from your front, move your body forward to meet this force. As your weight shifts forward, compress the imaginary spring between your knees, compress your spine (coil your back), sink down your whole-body and press the balloon into the water while pressing your arms together (close, *He*, 合). Do not lift your heels off the ground. Initially, do this slowly and evenly; feel the drag of the water on your entire body as you rock forwards and backwards. Once you have a feel of your body movement, minimize and internalize your movement, make the motion *motionless* and small but do not keep absolutely *still*. This posture is used to sense primarily the lateral open/close forces.

## At Ease Parallel-Step Posture (*Xiu Xi Zhuang*, 休息桩)

From the basic parallel-step posture, place the back of your hands on your back above your hips (kidneys), palms facing backwards. Visualize your hands are holding balloons. Keep your shoulders relaxed and allow them to naturally rotate slightly forward. Simply rest and relax (*Jing Zhong Qiu Song*, 静中求松) or practice to synthesize your whole-body using any one of the rocking, swaying or rotating visualization of the basic parallel-step posture.

## Sitting Posture (*Zuo Shi*, 坐式)

These postures are used to improve health of people who are too weak to stand. They are recorded here for information only. If needed, please seek expert advice on healing aspect of Yiquan from qualified instructor.

**Sitting (1):** Sit upright. Keep your head and back erect as in the basic parallel-step posture. Place feet shoulder width apart flat on the ground; shins perpendicular to the ground. Place

hands palms up on your thighs near your hips. Visualize your feet are stepping on top of soft cotton. Practice all the requirements of the basic posture-for-health.

**Sitting (2):** Sit as above; stretch your legs out slightly; keep your knees bent. Lift your heels off the ground; pull your toes back. Hold your hands as in basic parallel-step *Prop/hug* posture at shoulder level, palms facing your face as if hugging a lightweight paper balloon. Practice all the requirements of the basic posture-for-health.

## Lying-down Posture (*Wo Shi*, 卧式)

This posture is for improving health of people who are too weak to sit and is recorded here for information only.

Lie on your back. Bend your knees; place your heels on your bed; toes pulled back. Position your hands as in the basic *Prop/hug* posture. Practice all the requirements of the basic posture-for-health. If this is still too tiring, you may lower your upper arms onto your bed.

## Walking

Be comfortable and natural when walking. As you push off your right foot to take a forward step with your left foot, you instinctively swing your right arm forward, inward, and upward; keep your mind-intent and focus concentration to *transmit* the reaction forces of pushing off the ground with your right foot to your right hand, i.e., maintain equilibrium, proper musculoskeletal support, optimal *alignment*, and *connected-ness*. Take up power from the ground. When stepping forward with your right foot, push off your left foot; spontaneously swing your left hand forward, inward, and upward while swinging your right hand downward, outward, and backward. Mentally take up power from the ground and *transmit* the force from your left foot to your left hand. Repeat this sequence as you walk forward; it should be natural, instinctive, with no conscious effort or thought from the practitioner.

诀曰：筋肉收敛而舒放，骨骼支撑，关节灵活，气力均整。

Oral Tradition: Keep muscles and tendons relaxed and poised to discharge/release your balanced-force; use skeletal support; maintain elastic flexibility at all joints; merge all force components as “one”.

## Standing-Postures-for-Fighting (*Ji Ji Zhuang*, 技击桩)

With relaxed-standing-postures-for-health (*Jian Shen Zhang*, 健身桩) as foundation, you may practice standing-postures-for-fighting (*Ji Ji Zhuang*, 技击桩). Yiquan employs a number of different postures for training and conditioning for combat readiness. The general criteria regarding body positioning for all of the fighting-postures are as follows:

Always keep the shoulders down, relaxed and level (*Chen Jian*, 沉肩, *Jian Ping*, 肩平), elbows propped out and articulated (*Heng Cheng Shu Bao*, 横撑竖抱), and the back naturally erect, neutrally straight (*Yao Ji Gu Chui Xian Cheng Zhi*, 腰脊骨垂线成直). Maintain a bend in all body joints between 90 and 180 degrees (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直) while retaining mentally induced isometric-opposing-force-pairs (imaginary connecting springs) between various body elements (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力). Practice as if you are confronting an opponent; face him at an angle. In general, presenting an oblique plane (bladed) to an attacker in a head-on attack will minimize your exposure yet allow you to agilely move into an attack. Do not raise the hands higher than eyebrow level; do not lower the hands lower than navel level. The left hand does not cross over the central line to your right side; the right hand does not cross over the central line to your left side. Do not extend your hands beyond your lead foot toes; do not let your hands or forearms contact your torso. Always keep your hands within this “comfort zone”.

诀曰：正面微转即斜面，斜面迎击正可摧。

Oral Tradition: Twist your torso to switch from being squared-on to being angled (bladed) to your opponent and vice versa. Angled (bladed) posture in a head-on attack minimizes your exposure and put you in position to defend and to counter; while squared-on facing posture let you use both hands in an all out vicious attack.

Because attention is the key to learning any skill and your mind is most susceptible to visualized suggestions when you are relaxed and still, by keeping your body in a relatively *still* (*Jing*, 静) position in relaxed-standing practice (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩), it is easier for you to concentrate your attention to:

1. Use visualization and mental imagery to synthesize the mind-body into a coordinated harmonized whole-body unity, to feel and perceive the relaxed mind-intent directed force; to perceive, explore, and experience the neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange and the internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs.
2. Use mental activities to control and direct the balanced-force and learn from the kinesthetic experience (*Ti Cha*, 体察). Cultivate and develop the *Hun Yuan Li* (浑元力).

3. Concentrate and focus your mind-intent to cultivate a combat mindset. Courage, self-confidence (developed through use of self enlargement), and an appropriately aggressive attitude are necessary for dealing with a hand-to-hand conflict/confrontation.
4. Use crisis rehearsal by playing mental movies to establish *un*-conscious decision-making references for automatic (spontaneous) reflexes, to reduce reaction lag time and develop “*agility*”, to overcome your “*startled response*”.

Careful practice of these essential aspects of Yiquan leads to the ability to instinctively and instantaneously deliver strikes with focused balanced-force at your target at will. Your mind-body reflex becomes *un*-conscious, instinctive, natural, spontaneous, and automatic (*Bu Qi Zi Ran Zhi*, 不期自然至).

In practicing relaxed-standing fighting-postures, the basic requirements are the same as for relaxed-standing postures-for-health:

1. Maintain appropriate balance between relaxation and tension.

诀曰：筋肉收敛而舒放，骨骼支撑，关节灵活，气力均整。

Deeply relax your coordinated whole-body mentally and physically.

2. Breathe with natural ease.

诀曰：呼吸纯任自然。

Do not hold or lengthen your breath. Do not focus on your inhale or exhale, on your lower abdomen, or on a sound as in some meditation.

3. Pay close attention.

诀曰：精神意念高度集中。

Use focused concentration to direct mental activities; replace negative thoughts with positive images (*principle of replacement*). Do self-exploration and self-examination, *look* inwards, *listen* to your body, *read* your muscles; use kinesthetic perception to condition and synthesize your neuromuscular coordination system.

In the postures-for-fighting training and conditioning, you are primarily concerned with cultivating and nurturing the ability to experience, learn, develop, and use of the “*balanced-force*” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力), the “*isometric-opposing-force-pairs*” (*Zheng Li*, 争力), the “*path-of-force-propagation*” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路), and the combat mindset. We need to explore and define these concepts before describing the training methods for standing-postures-for-fighting.

## The Balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力)

In Yiquan, the ideal force for hand-to-hand fighting is called the “*balanced-force*” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). In use, it is “*effort-less*” (*Bu Jue Li Zhi Li*, 不觉力之力), sudden (*Tu Ran*, 突然), explosive (*Bao Fa Li*, 爆发力), instinctive, natural, and is delivered spontaneously over very short distances (*Quan Da Cun Jing*, 拳打寸劲) at extremely high speed onto your opponents. This clean, crisp execution requires total harmony of your whole-body action and force, i.e., using your neuromuscular coordination in perfect whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调). Harmony of neuromuscular action, merging all components of your musculature as “one” (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一), is the single most important prerequisite of harmony of force, i.e., merging all components of forces as “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). Then, the mind and body work in synch and the movements flow with no conscious effort to deliver the force (*effort-less*, 不觉力之力). While directed towards a primary target, this force is manifested in all (multiple) directions simultaneously through the use of internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争) in order to preserve your equilibrium (stability) at the moment of striking. It has a primary direction but it does not have an absolute direction. This attribute of balance means it can be changed and adapted quickly and easily according to your opponent. We thus refer to such a force as the “*balanced-force*”.

诀曰：不觉力之力，莫大于变化，顺生于自然，不觉其力也，故谓之浑元。

Oral Tradition: When your mind-intent, neuromuscular coordination, physical actions and force are harmonized and merged as one, the force is called the balanced-force. This balanced-force is instinctive, natural, effortless, and adaptable to quick changes.

The balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) you aspire to develop in your Yiquan training relies on different aspects of strength than what are typically used in your daily activities. The way to acquire this multi-directional balanced-force requires diligent relaxed-standing practice (*Zhuang Fa Huan Jing*, 桩法换劲) to re-pattern your neuromuscular system into a new habit of always using your whole-body in unison and harmonized coordination, progressing from a trained, heightened state of sensing and seeking slight movement (*Wei Dong*, 微动) from *motionless-movement* to accomplish your whole-body harmony.

诀曰：先由不动中去体会，再由微动中求认识。

Oral Tradition: First, use stillness practice to sense, perceive, and experience, then use motionless-movement practice to learn, know, cultivate, and master the connectedness, alignment, path of force propagation and neuromuscular coordination necessary to achieve whole-body harmony of action and force.

The following inter-related concepts are essential for this conditioning:

1. Use the *ground path*: Visualize your body as a conduit conducting the ground (transmitting the reaction forces from pushing off the ground) to the point of contact with your opponent.

诀曰：力从足生，拔地欲飞。

Oral Tradition: Take up power from the ground; transmit the reaction forces from pushing off the ground to the contact/impact point.

2. Use optimal body *alignment* and proper *connected-ness*: Relax your muscles. With proper skeletal bone structure *alignment* and *connected-ness*, use your skeletal structure to maintain your posture/*frame* and *connect* your upper body to your lower body. Your skeletal structure supports your weight, freeing your muscles to propel your strike. Nurture the path-of-force-propagation.

诀曰：骨骼支撑，舒展连通。

Oral Tradition: Use musculoskeletal support; maintain comfortable flexibility, alignment, and connected-ness.

3. Use whole-body movement (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调): Use your torso (core) to drive your limbs; throw all your strikes from your “center”. Pushing off the foot, continue with opening your joints (ankle, knee, hip, torso, shoulder and elbow), straightening your legs and trunk, shifting your weight and add the fast pivoting of your hips, waist, torso and shoulders, the upper arm swing, and culminate in a forearm twist, wrist and finger snap, all working together to allow you to use your whole-body in hitting and pushing. The motions are concurrent, overlapping, and sequential to achieve maximum acceleration of the striking point. Each element is moved only as part of your whole-body, never independently.

诀曰：力由脊发，所发之力源自腰脊。

Oral Tradition: Discharge/release your force/power from your spine, from your center (core).

4. Use natural wave-like (*Bo Lang*, 波浪; *Qi Fu*, 起伏) spiral-winding movements and whip-like core/torso oscillating movements (*Gu Dang*, 鼓荡) to generate fast reflexive elastic “spring-like force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力). Every move must contain twists and pivots of body elements (*Zuan Fan Luo Xuan*, 钻翻螺旋). The muscular winding and your body

structure produce these movements (silk reeling) naturally with ease. Straight linear movements are unnatural.

诀曰:由整体动荡中求弹力。

Oral Tradition: Use core/torso oscillation to generate elastic “spring-like force”.

诀曰:形曲力直。

Oral Tradition: Deliver linear balanced-force from curved physical form.

诀曰:出入螺旋式。

Oral Tradition: Every movement must involve twists, drills, and pivots of multiple body elements.

5. Use opposing-force-pairs (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力): Internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力) between body elements form the basis for developing the balanced-force. The most important pair is the vertical (up/down) opposing-force-pair mildly stretching your spine (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力). Use external opposing-force-pairs (*Shen Wai Zheng Li*, 身外争力) between body elements and the surrounding air or imaginary external objects to hone your whole-body coordination (宇宙争力).

诀曰:假借无穷宇宙力。

Oral Tradition: Visualize harmonizing and interacting with the unlimited forces of the surrounding universe.

Before proceeding to describe the combat mindset and fighting postures, we need to further explore the very important concept of “*opposing-forces*” (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力), and its relationship to elastic “spring-like force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力), and reflexes (*Fan Ying*, 反应), etc.

### **Opposites (*Mao Dun*, 矛盾) and Isometric-Opposing-Forces (*Zheng Li*, 争力)**

Using mental visualization (*Yi Nian Huo Dong*, 意念活动) to “*induce the feeling*” of mild isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Zheng Li*, 争力) between different body elements is called internal opposites (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力), between body elements and external objects is called external opposites (*Shen Wai Zheng Li*, 身外争力). In reality, these *Zheng Li* are mentally induced neuromuscular relaxation and tension exchanges (*Song Jin Hu Xiang Zhuan Huan*, 松紧互相转换). They are the tools that you would used to synthesize your mind-body into a whole-body harmony, into “*one-ness*” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一).



诀曰:站桩是求松紧谐调,整体松紧运用自如。

Oral Tradition: Stillness practice is used to achieve an appropriate balance between tension and relaxation to provide whole-body harmony.

Ideally, internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力) should exist between every body element. Practically, your mind cannot handle so much detail. You should therefore concentrate on the induced force pairs along principal axis. By keeping your concentration on the big picture, the details will fall into place.

**Vertical:** The most important is the vertical isometric-opposing-pair mildly elongating your spine (上下相引). Visualize sitting on a high stool with a string attached to your head pulling it upwards, or visualize stretching or compressing imaginary springs connecting your feet to your head (头虚领, 脚下踩). Along with optimal skeletal *alignment*, this is the key to developing your proper “*connected-ness*” (*Lian Tong*, 连通).

诀曰:松紧之枢纽在於上下,上下相引为周身互争之法。

Oral Tradition: The key to appropriately balancing relaxation and tension is the mild vertical elongation along your spine; the (up/down) vertical isometric-opposing-force-pair is the dominant factor in whole-body *Zheng Li*.

**Lateral (Left/right, Sideways):** The lateral pair hyper-extending your back, shoulders, and arms is accomplished by visualizing hugging a fragile paper balloon and imaginary springs between your wrists, between your wrists and your neck. The hugging-in intention should be the primary (70%) and the propping-out intention the secondary (30%).

诀曰:横撑竖抱,撑三抱七。

Oral Tradition: Prop-out 30%, hug-in 70%.

**Forward/backward:** In fixed-step exercises in the small-step posture, visualize pushing your front knee forwards and upwards and your rear hip backwards and downwards while holding a balloon between your knees, or imaginary springs between your knees (*Xiang Zheng Xiang Lian*, 相争相连). Your front shin should be normal (perpendicular) to the ground (angle between foot and shin must be larger than 90 degrees) as if braced from all sides. Even as your weight shifts as you move in “*motionless-movement*” or fixed step “*trial-and-feel*” (*Shi Li*, 试力) your front knee must be kept stationary, shin normal (perpendicular) to the ground (pivoting is allowed), the front knee must never move in front of your front foot toe. When moving your weight forward, visualize pushing off with your rear leg with inward twisting/*drilling* (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) while mildly opposing the forward movement with push off with your front leg, also twisting/*drilling* inwards, squeezing your knees inwards and compress the imaginary spring

between your knees. When moving your weight backward, visualize pushing off with your front leg with outward twisting/*drilling* (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) while arresting the rearward movement with outward *drilling* of your rear leg, opening up your knees and stretch the imaginary spring between your knees. These mentally induced actions must not be physically visible.

It is impossible to isolate internal and external *Zheng Li* or limit *Zheng Li* purely to only one principal dimension in practice (*Er Zheng Li*, 二争力). However, you should begin practice of external *Zheng Li* (*Wai Zheng Li*, 外争力) with one principal dimension as the dominant dimension. However, the goal is a force balanced in all (six) directions (*Liu Mian Li*, 六面力).

**Example 1:** To practice *Er Zheng Li* (二争力) in the forward/backward direction, visualize imaginary springs connecting your fingertips to a tree in front of you, extending the imaginary springs as you pull backward and compressing them as you push forward.

From that foundation, practice using your whole-body internal *Zheng Li* (*Zheng Ti Zheng Li*, 整体争力) to interact with your surrounding in all the three principal dimensions. When you have mastered whole-body harmony of actions, try to figure out the elastic “spring-like forces” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) associated with the relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) and the reflexive core/torso oscillation (*Gu Dang*, 鼓荡) from rapidly switching directions.

**Example 2:** You may reverse directions “rapidly” from backward to forward, (or downward to upward, etc.), to use your core/torso oscillation to generate/develop *Tan Li* (弹力).

Explore the forces of wave-like spirals (*Bo Lang*, 波浪), the up/down interaction (*Qi Fu*, 起伏) with gravitational acceleration (*Zhong Li Bo*, 重力波), and the inertial/momentum force (*Dong Dang*, 动荡) associated with free-step (*Huo Bu*, 活步). It is important to *look* inwards, *listen* to your body and *read* your muscles in this training (*Nei Shi*, 内视). *Tan Li* (弹力) is cultivated and nurtured with practicing *Zheng Li* (争力) with small amplitude high frequency relaxation/tension exchanges; it is the foundation for internalizing skills into spontaneous reflexive actions (*Fan Ying*, 反应); it is a primary component of your “*combat mindset*”; it cannot be developed from slow-motion training.

诀曰：假借无穷宇宙力。

Oral Tradition: Visualize harmonizing and interacting with the unlimited forces of the surrounding universe.

诀曰：揣摩意中力。

Oral Tradition: Perceive and feel; comprehend and experience; try to figure out, through self-exploration/kinesthetic-perception, the force embedded in your intentional

component (mind-intent, attention, and focus concentration) and the path of force propagation from the ground to your hand.

### Combat Mindset: Courage and Confidence

In fighting, if you have doubts about winning, you will lose. You must have the courage and confidence to win; think positively; visualize your success; negative thoughts impede focus. You can build up this psychological confidence by mentally enlarging yourself (*Zi Wo Fang Da*, 自我放大). When practicing relaxed-standing, visualize yourself as a giant; confidently standing among the hills challenging the highest peak. Imagine a string pulling the top of your head upwards (*Shang You Sheng Diao Xi*, 上有绳吊系); wood braces and pillars propping up your legs (*Xia You Mu Zhi Cheng*, 下有木支撑), you cannot fall. Stay mentally focused and physically relaxed: keep shoulders down; elbows propped out, back naturally erect. Maintain a bend in all body joints between 90 and 180 degrees. Invoke your *confrontation response* with situational awareness, always feel the presence of an opponent (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌); be ready to “*explode*” the balanced-force as external force onto your opponent in any direction instantaneously in spite of your fear.

Mental crisis rehearsal (playing mental movies) is essential in developing your combat mindset. The general principle is: In solo practice, visualize fighting your strongest opponent. In a conflict/confrontation, let your body react automatically and spontaneously as if your opponent does not exist; reacting instinctively and naturally; making the proper moves at the proper time with no conscious thinking.

诀曰:平时练习如临大敌之象,交手时有人若无人之境。

Oral Tradition: In training, visualize fighting your strongest enemy; in fighting, let your powerful *un*-conscious mind draw on established decision-making references, doing the proper action at the proper time instinctively, naturally, and spontaneously with total freedom.

NOTES: You must use realistic crisis-rehearsal/visualization (real experience from sparring) to develop this combat mindset.

### The Small-Step Posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩)

The small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩) is a must. It is the starting point from which to seek, to be aware of, to perceive, to understand, to explore, to kinesthetically experience, to cultivate, to develop, and to master the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). We shall only describe the left-lead posture; you must practice both the left- and right-leads.

Relax naturally. Stand comfortably erect; heels together, toes apart at 60 degrees. Slide your left foot a small comfortable step forward in the direction of your left foot and move it one foot's width to your left, to a position where you can comfortably lift your left foot without shifting your weight (*Ding Ba Bu*, 丁八步). Twist your body left slightly; shift your weight back and down onto your right leg bending both legs slightly, weight distribution 30% on left 70% on right. Do not twist the torso; align the shoulder over the hip. Visualize sitting on a high stool with a string attached to the top of your head pulling it upward creating mild vertical tension (elongation) on your spine (vertical opposing-force-pair: visualize stretching imaginary springs between your feet and your head). Keep your spine neutrally straight (*Yao Ji Gu Chui Xian Cheng Zhi*, 腰脊骨垂线成直). Visualize directing a small force in your left knee forward and upward and a small force in your right hip backward and downward creating mild horizontal internal tension (forward/backward opposing-force-pair).

Keep the weight on your left foot mostly on the ball of your left foot (i.e., do not put much weight on the heel of your front foot, 前足跟为虚) but do not lift your left heel off the ground. Visualize holding down a newspaper with your left heel; if someone pulls on the newspaper, it should drag slightly but should slip out without tearing. Keep the angle between your left foot and left shin larger than 90 degrees, almost normal (perpendicular) to the ground; visualize your left front knee is braced from all directions. Visualize holding a balloon between your knees resulting in a slight weight bias on the inside edge of your right foot; do not lift the outside edge of your right foot off the ground. With weight bias towards the balls of your feet and not putting much weight on your heels, your legs act like springs, ready to move you in any direction.

Lift hands up (without disturbing your relaxed shoulders), left hand slightly higher than shoulder level, right hand at shoulder level, as if holding a large fragile balloon between your chest and arms. Apply both inward (primary 70%) and outward (secondary 30%) pressure through the arms: do not crush the balloon; do not let the balloon drop. Keep your left hand on top of your left foot; palm facing your nose. Keep your nose, left hand, and left foot in vertical alignment. Hold your right hand slightly lower than your left hand in front of your body central line; palm facing your chest, mildly hyper-extending your shoulders and back (lateral opposing-force-pair). Keep all joint angles larger than 90 degrees, smaller than 180 degrees.

Keep fingers slightly bend, visualize holding cotton balls between your fingers. Do not crush or drop these cotton balls. Visualize imaginary springs between your knees, between your wrists, and between your wrists and your neck. Direct these internal *Zheng Li* (争力) actions with your mind-intent; do not use any brute strength; stay relaxed.

It is important to consider the aforementioned postural guidelines as setting up a series of internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Zheng Li*, 争力) in the body that train and condition the corresponding body parts to simultaneously direct force in opposite directions within a single dimension (*Er Zheng Li*, 二争力): push up with your head while sinking your hips downward; push ahead with the forward knee while pushing backward with the rear hip; push the elbows apart and outward while squeezing inward with the arms. Developing the internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs is integral to developing the balanced-force. Visualize imaginary springs

connecting your knees, connecting your wrists, connecting your wrists to your neck, connecting your feet to your head, etc., facilitates *Zheng Li* between every body element (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力).

Requirements for head, teeth, tongue, mouth, nose, eyes, ears, back, shoulders, and elbows are similar to the posture-for-health. Let's do a quick check:

诀 曰: 头 虚 领。

**Head:** Head and neck erect (stand tall); slightly tuck-in your chin like holding a small balloon between your chin and neck. Imagine a string attached to the top of your head pulling it upwards. Relax facial muscles; maintain almost a smile. The greatest residual tensions are those of the face and neck.

诀 曰: 齿 微 扣。

**Teeth:** Lightly touching.

**Tongue:** Lay naturally slightly retracted or rests the tip on the upper palate of your mouth.

**Mouth:** Lips slightly parted.

**Nose:** Breathe normally with natural ease; do not pay attention to breathing; do not hold or lengthen your breath.

诀 曰: 默 对 长 空。

**Eyes:** Broaden your focus, expanding your peripheral vision; imagine looking through a light fog. As your training progresses to include the combat mindset, narrow your focus to a faraway object like watching a bird flying near a distant cloud in a blue sky.

诀 曰: 静 听 微 雨。

**Ears:** Listen quietly, passively to the sound of falling rain.

诀 曰: 身 躯 挺 拔, 腰 脊 骨 垂 线 成 直。

**Back:** Keep your spine naturally straight and neutrally erect. Relax your lower back and let it fill out as if sitting on a high stool.

诀 曰: 塌 肩 坠 肘。

**Shoulders:** Down and relaxed, visualize holding small balloons in your armpits.

诀曰：横撑竖抱，撑三抱七。

**Elbows:** Prop-out to your sides, articulated but no higher than shoulder. The hugging-in force is primary (hug-in 70%); the propping-out force is secondary (prop-out 30%).

诀曰：脚下踩。

**Feet:** Flat on ground, lead foot may be weighted towards the ball of your foot but keep your heel on the ground, rear foot is bias towards the inside edge but keep the outside edge on the ground. “Feel” the ground with the balls of both feet; legs are slightly bent (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直), like loaded springs.

All body joints are slightly bent (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直), between 90 and 180 degrees. Except hands and arms positions, these are requirements for all the fighting-postures. Attempt to satisfy these requirements as instinctively, naturally, and as comfortably as possible. Once you have satisfied them, do not dwell on them; let your body operate naturally instinctively between conscious-ness and *un*-conscious-ness. Do not be conscious of meeting all these requirements. Instead of trying to satisfy these requirements, pretend you have already mastered them.

NOTES: The objectives of the small-step fighting-posture are:

1. To achieve mind-body harmony. Synthesize your mind-body into a coordinated harmonized spring-like whole-body unity (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调); re-pattern your neuromuscular system to the new habit of always using whole-body coordination, merging musculature as “one” (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一) to cultivate whole-body force (*Zheng Li*, 整力).
2. Using “*kinesthetically meeting resistance*” (*Ti Cha Zu Li*, 体察阻力) exercises, seek, sense, and nurture the “*path-of-force-propagation*” (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路); perceive and feel for the force in all six-directions (*Liu Mian Mo Li*, 六面摸力); and merging force components as “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一) to cultivate the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力).
3. Using neuromuscular “*relaxation/tension exchange*” (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) with core/torso oscillation (*Zheng Ti Dong Dang*, 整体动荡) develop the elastic “*spring-like force*” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) and the ability to spontaneously “*explode*” internal strength as a “burst” of external force while maintaining equilibrium (*Bao Fa Li*, 爆发力).

4. Strengthen and develop combat mindset: Build the courage, confidence, and desire to win, set mental decision-making reference points for spontaneous reflexes for your “*confrontation response*”.

The benefits of relaxed-standing are not dependent on how long you stand or how you look externally. Your focused attention/concentration and realistic visualization in your mental directed activities are essential. Stop your practice when you lose attention/concentration.

诀曰: 锻炼是在无力中求有力, 在不动中求微动, 在微动中求速动。

Oral Tradition: Training and conditioning is to learn and master the balanced-force from using no brute strength, to sense and perceive motionless-movement from stillness, and to acquire, develop, and cultivate speed and whole-body harmony with motionless-movement.

That is, “*seeking, sensing, and feeling for the force*” (*Mo Li*, 摸力) using the “*motionless-movement*” is the primary training tool of relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩).

### **Motionless-movement for Developing Balanced-force (*Mo Li*, 摸力)**

While standing in the small-step posture, you may engage the following mental directed activities (*Yi Nian You Dao*, 意念诱导) to guide your kinesthetic perceptive movement practice to achieve neuromuscular coordination and whole-body harmony (*Qiu Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 求整体谐调). The initial goal: With optimal *connected-ness* and proper skeletal *alignment*, re-pattern your mind-body to move with *comfortable natural ease*, with harmony of action and harmony of force as one coordinated “whole-body”, with the mind and body working in synch and movements flowing with no conscious effort. This training and conditioning is called “*seeking and feeling for the force*” (*Mo Li*, 摸力) with “*motionless-movement*”. You must look inwards, feel your mind-body and read your muscles.

诀曰: 舒展连通, 全身力一。

Oral Tradition: With proper skeletal alignment, optimal connected-ness, and comfortable natural ease of movement, merge and synthesize all your force components as one whole-body coordinated balanced-force.

### **Examples of *Mo Li* (摸力):**

**1. Forward/Backward (*Qian Hou Mo Li*, 前后摸力):** Stand in the left-lead small-step posture. Visualize hugging an imaginary tree with your entire body; your arms, torso, and legs are all in contact with the imaginary tree. Using your whole-body, slowly and slightly push this tree forward and pull it backward. When you push forward, twist (squeeze) your knees slightly

inwards and push off (*drill* inwards with your legs; *Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) your feet. Squeeze the balloon between your knees and extend the opposing-force-pairs (imaginary springs) from your feet to your head. Push your hands slightly forward, inward, and downward. When you pull backward, twist your knees slightly outward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) and push off with your front foot, extend the opposing-force-pairs from your front foot to your head, from your front knee to your rear hip. Pull your hands slightly backward, outward, and upward. Do it slowly and evenly with very, very small careful movement, flexing every joint of your body; feel the drag of the surrounding on your entire body as you move front and back. Once you have a feel of your body movement (perceive movement), minimize and internalize your movement, make the motion become *motionless-movement*. Visualize, use your mind-intent to lead, get the feeling with no actual physical movement, and do not use any strength.

**2. Upward/Downward (*Shang Xia Mo Li*, 上下摸力):** Stand in the left-lead small-step posture. Visualize hugging an imaginary tree with your entire body; your arms, torso, and legs are all in contact with the tree. Using your whole-body, slowly and slightly push this tree upward (get under the tree and lift upward) and plant it downward. When you push upward, squeeze (twist) the knees inward and extend the opposing-force-pairs from your head to your feet; push your arms slightly upward, inward, and forward. When you plant it downward, twist your knees slightly outward; extend the opposing-force-pair from your front foot to your head; pull your hands slightly downward, backward, and outward. Do it slowly and evenly with very, very small and careful movement, flexing every joint; feel the drag of the surrounding on your entire body as you move. Once you have a feel of your body movement, minimize and internalize your movement, make the motion become *motionless-movement*. Visualize, do this exercise with no actual physical movement and no strength.

**3. Open/Close (Lateral/Sideways, *Kai He Mo Li*, 开合摸力):** Stand in the left-lead small-step posture. Visualize hugging an imaginary tree with your entire body; your arms, torso, and legs are all in contact with the tree. Using your whole-body, slowly and slightly rip this tree open (tear open) laterally and squeeze it together (close). When you squeeze your arms inward, twist your knees outward to move your heels inward and extend the opposing-force-pair from your head to your front foot. Push your arms slightly inward, backward, and downward. When you rip (tear) the tree open laterally, twist your knees slightly inward turning your heels outward. Extend the opposing-force-pair from your feet to your head. Pull your hands slightly laterally outward (open), upward, and forward; twist your forearms to palms facing downward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋). Do it slowly and evenly with very, very small and careful movement, flexing every joint; feel the drag of the surrounding on your entire body as you move. Once you have a feel of your body movement, minimize and internalize your movement, make the motion become *motionless-movement*. Visualize, do this exercise with no physical movement and no strength.

**4. Six-Direction (*Liu Mian Mo Li*, 六面摸力):** Do the above (1, 2, and 3) in sequence. Push the imaginary tree forward, pull it backward, lift it upward, plant it downward, rip it open, and squeeze it together. Focus your mind-intent to lead your action; do not use any brute strength (*Zhuo Li*, 拙力); keep relaxed at all times. Slight movement or no movement is all that is



necessary. Large movement is inferior to small movement; small movement is inferior to no movement. Seek slight *motion-in-stillness*; seek tension in relaxation and relaxation in tension. When you become competent, mix up and change the sequence at will (*Da Luan Cheng Xu*, 打乱程序). You may also add clockwise and/or counter-clockwise whole-body pivoting and rotation into the sequence (*Yao Fa*, 摇法, *Xuan Fa*, 旋法; see sections in postures-for-health).

**5. All Directions and No Directions (*Hun Yuan Mo Li*, 浑元摸力):** You begin practicing by sensing resistance along one axis (one dimension), e.g., linearly forward/backward (*Er Zheng Li*, 二争力). Then, you add other dimensions when you are comfortable and can feel this imaginary immovable tree. Next, you mix up and change the sequence; “shake” this imaginary tree in any direction at will. Being able to switch the force directions rapidly is the foundation of “agility” and the foundation of the elastic “spring-like force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力). Finally, you must mentally do all directions and no directions simultaneously (*Liu Mian Tong Shi Mo Li*, 六面同时摸力). Your mind enters a “fuzzy” state in which you are ready to move in any direction instinctively. This is the unified coordinated whole-body harmony from which you can sense and use your balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) spontaneously, reacting automatically to any external stimuli. This is the foundation for fast automatic spontaneous reflexive action, the foundation for *un*-conscious response (*Yi Wu Yi*, 意无意) with minimal lag time.

NOTES: Relaxed-standing is the foundation of Yiquan. The most advanced technique in Yiquan is still relaxed-standing. Yiquan uses these basic types of visualization or mental imaging:

1. Visualization to help you relax, to find a tranquil place in your mind and body (passive).
2. Visualization to guide your self-exploration and kinesthetic perception, sense your internal/external opposing-force-pairs, to develop your whole-body neuromuscular coordination (active), to achieve whole-body harmony.
3. Mental imaging or crisis rehearsal to establish *un*-conscious decision-making reference points for spontaneous reflexive action, to develop your combat mindset, to reduce spontaneous reaction lag time.

Think, explore, experiment, experience, and extrapolate. From one thing you will know ten thousand things.

诀曰: 锻炼是在无力中求有力, 在不动中求微动, 在微动中求速动。

Oral Tradition: Training and conditioning is to learn and master the balanced-force from using no brute strength, to sense and perceive motionless-movement from stillness, and

to acquire, develop, and cultivate speed and whole-body harmony with motionless-movement.

## Other Standing-Postures-for-Fighting

From the small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩), changing your hand positions (together with different mental visualizations) result in a number of other postures. Each posture is designed to condition your mind-body coordination for a specific action. For example, in the process of power discharge/release to the front, you start from the small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩), palms facing your chest. Then you rotate your forearms through palms facing down to palms facing forward at the completion. Thus, three distinct postures are selected for relaxed-standing practice: palms facing chest, palms facing down, and palms facing forward. These different postures do not represent different levels. Instead each is for achieving a specific goal. Set your goal; select and practice the appropriate posture to produce the desired results. Always adjust your posture as necessary to remain at *comfortable natural ease*. We shall describe some important standing postures below to complete this chapter.

### Down-Press Small-Step Posture (*Fu Bao Zhuang*, 俯抱桩) (*Fu An Zhuang*, 扶按桩)

Stand in the left-lead small-step posture. Rotate your forearms to palms facing down; keep your arms at shoulder level with hands slightly higher than elbows. Your lead hand is slightly higher than your rear hand, index fingers pointing at each other (*Fu Bao Zhuang*, 俯抱桩), or fingers pointing to the front (*Fu An Zhuang*, 扶按桩). Visualize holding an imaginary ball in each hand and hugging an imaginary tree between your body and your arms. This is the transition position for explosive pushing power discharge/release to the front. Sense resistance and seek the spring-like whole-body harmony unity. You may use all the visualization scenarios of the basic small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩) to cultivate force (*Mo Li*, 摸力). (See Appendix D for an example of training using the *Fu An Zhuang*, 扶按桩.)

### Forward/Upward Push/Lift Small-Step Posture (*Tui Tuo Zhuang*, 推托桩)

Stand in the left-lead small-step posture. Lift hands to eyebrow level; rotate forearms to palms facing forward; direct your index fingers to point upwards with mind-intent. Visualize imaginary light weight springs connecting your index fingers to your eyebrows on the side near

your nose; left index fingers to your right eyebrow; right index finger to your left eyebrow. These imaginary crossed springs keep you from yanking your hands apart. Prop your elbows outwards. Visualize imaginary springs connecting your wrists and your wrists to the back of your neck. Feel the opposing tension as you push slightly forward and upwards with your palms while directing your neck backwards (with mind-intent only, do not show external movement of neck moving backwards). This is the final position for forward explosive pushing power discharge/release. Sense internal and external opposing-forces (*Zheng Li*, 争力), seek the spring-like whole-body harmony unity and release of the balanced-force. Visualize hugging a tree between your arms and body; it touches every part of your body. Your hands are holding on to a large balloon. Pushing off with your rear leg; squeeze your knees together slightly (*drilling* inwards), shift your weight slightly forward; move the tree and balloon forwards, inwards, and upwards slowly and evenly. Then push off your front foot, pull your knees apart slightly, shifting your weight slightly backwards (do not lean backwards); pull the tree and balloon backwards, outwards, and downwards. Use your whole-body to do these "*motionless-movement*" evenly and slowly. Also, you may use the other visualization scenarios of the basic small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩).

## Hook/Hang Small-Step Posture (*Gou Gua Zhuang*, 勾挂桩)

Stand in the left-lead small-step posture. Lift your hands to mouth level; the left hand slightly higher than the right hand. Point your fingers to the front, palms facing each other as if holding a ball between your hands. Bend your thumbs; pointing the first knuckles of your thumbs upwards. Index, middle, and ring fingers point forward; little fingers point down. Bend your wrists downward to form hooks between your wrists and forearms. The rest of the body requirements are the same as the basic small-step posture.

To develop whole-body harmony and seek the balanced-force: Pay special attention to developing the composite force for hook/hang defense. Directed Mental Activities:

1. Visualize hugging a tree that touches every part of your body. Push off your front foot, shifting your weight back slightly; with whole-body effort pull the tree backwards, plant it downwards, and squeeze it together. Push off your rear foot, shifting your weight forward; push the tree forward, lift it upwards, and rip it open. Sense, develop, and cultivate the six-direction balanced-force (*Liu Mian Mo Li*, 六面摸力).
2. Visualize a spring attached to each of your fingertip; the other end of the imaginary spring attached to a tree in front of your body. There are imaginary springs from the back of your neck to both wrists as well as between your wrists. Push off your front foot, shift your hips back and down slightly (stretch the imaginary spring between your knees); pull your hands backward, upward, and outward to the sides. Feel the resistance of the springs. Then, push off your rear foot, shift your hips up and forward (compress the spring between your knees); compress the springs between your wrists and between your

fingers and the tree; push forward, upward, and inward. Feel the pull of the springs on your neck. Use your mind-intent to guide your whole-body to do these "*motionless-movement*" evenly and slowly. Sense and interact with the external imaginary springs (*Shen Wai Zheng Li*, 身外争力).

## Large-Step Posture (Tame-The-Tiger-Posture, *Fu Hu Zhuang*, 伏虎桩)

Stand erect, heels together, feet at 60 degrees angle. Slide your left foot a big step forward (along the direction of your left foot); and move it one foot's width to your left. Twist torso left slightly then sit downwards and backwards towards your right leg. The angle between your right foot and shin is approximately 50-60 degrees; the angle between your left foot and shin is approximately 120-130 degrees. Your weight is distributed 30% on your left leg and 70% on your right. Visualize wood pillars supporting your knees. Visualize your left knee pushing forward; your right knee should turn inwards slightly and visualize pushing your right hip backwards. That is, visualize a forward/backward tension. As in the basic small-step posture, visualize sitting on a high stool with a string attached to the top of your head pulling it upwards, mildly elongating your spine vertically.

Place your left hand in front of (to the right of) your left knee, palm facing right, elbow pulling up slightly; place your right hand slightly lower than your navel, palm facing left. Visualize you are straddling a tiger. Both arms bend slightly; your left hand holding down the tiger's neck while your right hand holding down its waist. Visualize holding balloons under your arms, under your chin and cotton balls between your fingers. Relax your face muscles; almost smiling; keep your teeth lightly touching. Focus your eyes on a spot several feet in front (forward) of your lead foot.

The goal is to sense resistance and seek whole-body harmony when you are in a low stable but relatively immovable position. Train for releasing power downward and backward. Build up your leg strength. Wading step and large-step posture should be practiced together. Visualize holding down a tiger. The tiger tries to escape forward, backwards and side ways. You visualize preventing its attempts. Use all visualization of the basic small-step posture.

## Reverse T-Step Posture (The-Descending-Dragon-Posture, *Jiang Long Zhuang*, 降龙桩)

Start from the left-lead large-step standing posture, turn your left foot outwards to toes facing left; heel facing right in a reverse T-step. Shift your weight forward; straighten your right leg. Twist your body left; rotate your head and look at your right heel. Raise your right arm over head; palm faces front; thumb points down and back. Hold your left arm at your left side hip level; do not lock your elbow; palm faces down; thumb and index finger face front. Visualize

imaginary springs connecting the back of your neck to your right foot, left foot and wrists. Your wrists are connected by springs. Develop lateral balanced-force, front/back force and pivoting/twisting balanced-force for rear hand punch or strike, i.e., right hand strike with left leg forward and vice versa. The major power for these comes from pivoting your torso on an axis from your rear foot to your head over your lead leg. Sense resistance and seek whole-body harmony along the twisting/spiraling path between the ground and the palms. Directed Mental Activities:

1. Shift your weight slightly forward, pull your hands apart, and lengthen your spine to pull your neck and right heel apart (opposing-force-pair). Then shift your weight backwards, squeeze your arms together; relax the stretching on your spine. Do this "*motionless-movement*" with mind-intent; do not use any strength.
2. Push head up slightly; twist body left (right) while pulling arms apart. Keep shoulders relaxed. Do this "*motionless-movement*" with mind-intent; do not use strength.

This posture cultivates/develops the rotating/twisting power of your whole-body (twisting of your core/torso) for use in punching (e.g. *Zai Quan*, 栽拳) and in thrust kicks (e.g. *Deng Ta Jiao*, 蹬踏脚). Rapid reversal of core rotating/twisting provides the basis of the whip-like tangential force component (*Tan Dou Li*, 弹抖力).

## On-Guard Fighting Posture (Holding-The-Birds-Posture, *Niao Nan Fei Zhuang*, 鸟难飞桩)

This is your on-guard fighting posture. From the basic *Hook/hang* small-step posture (*Gou Gua Zhuang*, 勾挂桩), close your hand into a loose fist as if holding a live bird in each hand. If you hold them too tight, you kill the birds. If you hold them too loose, the birds will escape. Visualize each bird trying to escape, going in any and every direction independently. Without overt external movement, focus your mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to prevent the captured birds from escaping. Relax, use your imagination, and express your *motionless-movement* with the utmost degrees of comfort, ease, and freedom. Develop multi-directional balanced-force and instantaneous reaction to stimuli; sense, change, and adapt accordingly. Focus your mind-intent to guide you to initiate all punches, strikes, and kicks from this posture with no give away movement and no wasted motion.

NOTES: When fighting, keeping your hands/feet (*Shen Wu Ding Shi*, 身无定势) in constant small neutral motion allows you to initiate faster than from immobility. In order to increase the “spring” in your legs, do not put much weight on your heels (*Zu Gen Wei Xu*, 足跟为虚).

## One-Leg Standing Postures (*Du Li Zhuang*, 独立桩)

Lifting one leg off the ground greatly reduces your stability. Employing the “*ground path*”, optimal body *alignment*, and *connected-ness* become absolutely necessary. Keep your supporting leg slightly bend (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直).

1. Stand in the left-lead small-step posture. Shift your weight onto your rear leg and lift your front foot off the ground. Visualize springs connecting your neck to your front foot and springs under your front foot. Use mind-intent to do *motionless-movement*: press down slightly with your front foot while pushing your head slightly upwards. Feel the vertical internal opposing-force-pair between your neck and foot. Do not forget to prop your elbows out and hug the imaginary tree with your arms to maintain your *frame*.
2. Stand in the left-lead small-step posture. Shift your weight onto your front leg. Bring your rear leg up to the front; raise your right knee to navel level. Keep your right knee bend; right foot sole parallel to the ground; turn your right foot sideways with toes pointing right. Visualize springs connecting your right foot to your neck and spring under your right foot. Use mind-intent to do *motionless-movement*: compress the spring under your right foot; stretching the imaginary spring between your right foot and right shoulder, push your head slightly upwards. Feel the vertical internal opposing-force-pair between your neck and foot. Keep elbows propped out; hug your imaginary tree.

## One-Leg Supported Posture (*Dan Tui Yi Tuo Zhuang*, 单腿依托桩)

Stand in the left-lead small-step posture in front of a high stool (about navel height). Shift your weight onto your front (left) leg; keep it slightly bend (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直). Lift your rear (right) leg and place your right foot on the stool; toes pulled back pointing right; heel pushed forward. Visualize standing in waist deep water with your right leg placed on top of a floating log. Mentally, slightly kick sideways or downward and/or forward, stretching the imaginary spring between your right foot and right shoulder (e.g., draw your right shoulder back while pushing your right heel forward). Practice all directional *Mo Li* (摸力).

NOTES: These one-legged postures are preparations for kicking techniques. (See Appendix E for an example of training for kicks and knee strikes.) Sense resistance and seek the equilibrium state along the vertical (up/down) axis between your kicking leg and the rest of your body. Develop the ability to discharge/release the balanced-force while standing on one leg. Visualize hugging your tree between your arms and body; it touches every part of your body. Pay special attention to the vertical opposing-force-pair of your un-weighted foot and neck. Consciously practice kinesthetic perception of your whole-body coordinated neuromuscular movements to achieve whole-body harmony and to cultivate the balanced-force while standing on one leg.

## Sitting Fighting Posture (*Zuo Shi Fu Hu Zhuang*, 坐式伏虎桩)

Use a sturdy high table or stool. Sit high enough so that your feet do not touch the ground. Sit on the edge of this sturdy high table; assume the large-step (Tame-the-tiger, *Fu Hu Zhuang*, 伏虎桩) posture. Keep your feet off the ground, soles parallel to the ground. Feet positions are the same as the large step posture. Use any fighting posture hand position, e.g., down-press posture (*Fu Bao Zhuang*, 俯抱桩). Train to enable you to discharge/release power from a sitting position. Pay special attention to using the coiling and uncoiling movement of your torso. With the hips relatively fixed in place when seated, you are forced to train and emphasize your waist pivot and your spine coiling. Use the same visualization as in down-press small-step posture. Pay special attention to the vertical opposing-force-pair along your spine.

## Training Guideline - Summary

To start Yiquan relaxed-standing practice, you should decide which maneuver/technique is to be made into your “*habit*”, to be trained to become your spontaneous reflex and select the appropriate complimentary standing posture to train. Set realistic goals that you know you can achieve; focus on one realistic goal at a time by breaking down a big goal into small stages. And you should reward yourself for achieving each goal to encourage further development.

The goal: Sense and kinesthetically meet resistance in multiple dimensions; seek/sense/perceive the six-direction balanced-force (forward/backward, upward/downward, and laterally open/close; *Liu Mian Mo Li*, 六面摸力). Pay attention to whole-body harmony and mind-body unity. Synthesize your whole-body movement (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动) with appropriate “drilling” (*Yi Dong Quan Shen Zhuan*, 一动全身转) using “*curve physical form to deliver linear force*” (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直).

You may consider using the following concurrent sequential overlapping training stages. (Also, please see Appendix D for an example of a “training and conditioning” schedule.)

**Stage One** (*Jing Zhong Qiu Song*, 静中求松): Acquire whole-body *relaxation* (*Song*, 松) from *stillness* (*Jing*, 静).

Learn to invoke the *relaxation response* on demand. This is a necessary prerequisite to synthesize your body into the coordinated whole-body harmony unity. In this state, prior to any movement, your entire body is relaxed and breathing is natural. Passive mental imagery is used to induce mind-body relaxation, honing your nerves and senses to a high level of sensitivity;

your hairs seem to stand on ends, interacting with the surrounding (*Mao Fa Ru Ji*, 毛发如戟). You would feel a sense of heaviness in your core and limbs (*Shen Ru Qian Guan*, 身如铅灌).

**Stage Two** (*Song Zhong Qiu Zheng*, 松中求整): Develop whole-body *unity* (*Zheng*, 整) from *relaxation* (*Song*, 松).

When you can invoke the *relaxation response* on demand, proceed to sense and experience “*kinesthetically meeting resistance*” (*Ti Cha Zu Li*, 体察阻力) and to seek the “*balanced-force*” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). Actively, synthesize your neuromuscular coordination (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一) and merge all force components as *one* (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). During “*motion-in-stillness*”, you are focused; your body moves as one highly coordinated unit (if one part moves, it moves as part of your whole-body, never independently, every part moves in unison); your muscles augment each other; internal and external are integrated. Initially, do “*motionless-movement*” slowly (*Huan Yun Zhong Qiu*, 缓运中求) to feel and reinforce the sensation of the concurrent sequential overlapping movement of your joints and body elements in propagating the force from the ground to your hands. Use mind-intent to lead/guide/direct your force (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力).

Though, in early training you may focus your awareness, attention, and emphasis on any one dominant force direction, you should not neglect any of the other directions; forces in all directions are simultaneously present. With coordinated whole-body effort/strength, perceive (kinesthetic perception) force first in one then in both directions of a single dimension. (e.g., Do forward and backward directions: Mentally “*feel*” the solidity and weight of your imaginary tree, then using the *motionless-movement*, visualize pushing your imaginary tree forward and pulling it backward using the entire body.) Being able to correctly stand in the small-step posture, and use proper “*body mechanics*” (*Shu Zhan Lian Tong*, 舒展连通), is vital at this stage.

You must let your mind-body experience/feel/sense/perceive (*Ti Ren*, 体认) this synthesized, highly coordinated, whole-body harmony unity (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调). This state includes both the relaxation condition as well as the complementary focused/tensed condition. These conditions are relative, complimentary; you cannot experience one without the other. Both are manifested in the whole-body harmony state. Optimal *alignment* and proper *connected-ness* are essential. Your whole-body would seem to be forged in one piece (*Ti Zheng Ru Zhu*, 体整如铸).

**Stage Three** (*Qiu Liu Mian Li*, 求六面力): Develop the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) using simultaneous six-direction kinesthetic perception (*Liu Mian Tong Shi Mo Li*, 六面同时摸力).



The ideal force for hand-to-hand fighting has unique characteristics (see balanced-force, *Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). It is difficult to change nimbly and control your equilibrium if your strike or power release is not balanced in all directions. You must first train to release force in the six basic principal directions and then extrapolate it to all directions.

Initially, concentrate your mind-intent to focus and lead your force in one direction, then in opposing pairs, then to quickly switch between different directions. When you can successfully sense and encounter resistance in forward/backward directions then do up/down followed by open/close. Gradually add oblique directions, pivots and rotations. Focus your mind-intent to guide your action; do not use brute strength. This does not mean Yiquan does not use strength. It means use your mind-intent to direct your body to correctly use whole-body strength. Here, "do not use strength" is just to remind beginners who have not mastered whole-body movement not to use localized strength. In any action, use minimal prime mover (agonist) muscular force and allow your antagonist muscles to extend with minimal interference/tension. This is a mental directed exercise requiring visualization. Do not show any external physical movement. Let your whole-body sense/experience/feel/perceive the *motionless-movement*; use visualization to guide your kinesthetic perception, self-examination, and self-exploration. Merge all your neuromuscular actions as *one* (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一); merging all force components as one (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一).

When practicing switching your focus from one dominant direction to another, initially you may follow a sequence. Eventually, it should be done at random; there should be no conscious sequence or pattern (*Da Luan Cheng Xu*, 打乱程序). The next level is to focus on multiple-directions simultaneously (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争). The ideal mental state is to be aware of all directions and no direction in particular; you are simultaneously mindful and detached. Synthesize and harmonize mind-intent and force; the power goes to wherever your mind-intent goes (*Yi Dao Li Dao*, 意到力到). It is not necessary to focus your mind-intent and yet be ready to react in all directions instantaneously, spontaneously, with no conscious thinking.

诀曰: 不觉力之力, 莫大于变化, 顺生于自然, 不觉其力也, 故谓之浑元。

Oral Tradition: When your mind-intent, neuromuscular coordination, physical actions and forces are harmonized and merged as one, the force is called the balanced-force. This balanced-force is instinctive, natural, effortless, and adaptable to quick changes.

**Stage Four** (*Cong Zheng Ti Dong Dang Zhong Qiu Tan Li*, 从整体动荡中求弹力):

Develop your *spontaneous reflexes* (*Fan Ying*, 反应) and cultivate your whole-body elastic *spring-like force* (*Tan Li*, 弹力) by mentally induced whole-body core/torso oscillation.

The goal here is to develop every body element/component to behave like an “*elastic spring*” (*Bian Ti Si Tan Huang*, 遍体似弹簧). Any maneuver may be used; small amplitude and high frequency oscillation movement against light (imaginary) resistance is the key training measure. Start with large magnitude slow motion and gradually advance towards small magnitude fast motion. Slow motion large “swinging” movement training can not cultivate *Tan Li* (弹力). “Spring-like” or “whip-like” power-discharge (*Tan Li*, 弹力) is cultivated and nurtured by practicing rapid relaxation/tension exchanges (*Song Jin Zhuang Huan*, 松紧转换) against light resistance, switching your awareness and focus attention from using force in one dominant direction to another by using small rapid whole-body core/torso oscillation (*Dong Dang*, 动荡), taking up power from the ground. Initially, you may select to practice in one single dimension, i.e., switching from downwards to upwards (*Fu/Chen*, 浮/沉), or from backwards to forwards (*Tun/Tu*, 吞/吐), or laterally from close to open (*Kai/He*, 开/合), reversing the internal/external isometric-opposing-forces-pairs (*Nei Wai Zheng Li*, 内外争力), compressing/extending the imaginary springs to generate this “spring-like” force. When cultivating this *Tan Li* (弹力), it is important to not to put too much weight on your heels (*Zu Gen Wei Xu*, 足跟为虚) to maintain whole-body elasticity. You must coordinate as many internal opposing-force-pairs as possible to participate in your whole-body movement (*Zheng Ti Zheng Li*, 整体争力). The most important one is the vertical opposing-force-pair elongating your spine. Then pay attention to the forward/backward pair between your front knee and rear hip, followed by the prop/hug pair in your arms. As your training advances, add pairs between your hands and your head, between your hands and your feet, between your feet, or between any two body-parts by visualizing imaginary springs connecting them. Also develop the natural twisting/spiraling/*drilling* torsion of the torso and limbs (silk reeling forces), waist rotation and whole-body pivots (*Duo Mian Luo Xuan*, 多面螺旋). The invisible “*drilling*” (*Luo Xuan Li Wu Xing*, 螺旋力无形) is a major contributing factor of the “*spring-like force*” (*Tan Li*, 弹力).

**Stage Five** (*Bao Fa Nei Li Wei Wai Li*, 爆发内力为外力): To be useful, you must be able to *explode* your internal energy as a high speed *burst* of external force, onto your opponent via an effective maneuver/technique.

Focus your mind-intent to lead/guide/direct your whole-body balanced-force to the point of contact (*Li Dian*, 力点); merge and strengthen the “*path-of-force-propagation*” with little or no external movement (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路). At first, your mind-intent is ahead of and guides your force (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力). That is, you are “transmitting force of pushing off the ground” to the point of application (*Ba Li Da Dao Shen Wai*, 把力打到身外) with your relaxed *aligned* and *connected* whole-body (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯). As training progresses you should achieve *simultaneity*: develop the ability to “*will*” your whole-body balanced-force to any body part instantaneously; mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) and force “*arriving*” simultaneously (*Yi Dao Li Dao*, 意到力到). When you can do this *motionless-movement* in any direction at will, you should increase the switching speed of relaxation/tension exchange so it becomes a “blurred, fuzzy state”. Move from sensing/perceiving the balanced-force in different

directions to sensing/perceiving it in multiple-directions simultaneously and no direction in particular (*Liu Mian Tong Shi Mo Li*, 六面同时摸力). You move to a no mind-intent state (*Yi Wu Yi*, 意无意): a state that affords the greatest potential for effectively “*exploding*” the balanced-force as external force. It is not necessary to focus your mind-intent yet you are ready to react in all directions instantaneously with no conscious thinking. In essence, you relegate your actions to your powerful automatic *un*-conscious response; skill becomes spontaneous reflex. Developing this state of unified coordinated whole-body harmony is a prerequisite to reaching the highest level of achievement in Yiquan: Mind-intent and the balanced-force become inseparable and indistinguishable (*Yi Li Bu Fen*, 意力不分).

**Stage Six (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌):** Use mental crisis rehearsal to building your combat mindset and developing your *confrontation response*.

When you have re-patterned and re-coordinated your body to act as a synthesized whole-body harmony unity, you will have eliminated all localized movement; achieved *one-ness*; every move will involve whole-body movement. Power discharge/release using this whole-body movement has a primary direction and is balanced in all directions, “*exploding*” on-contact with your target (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发; *Yi Fa Ji Zhi*, 一发即止); yet if untouched by your opponent, you remain completely relaxed with no force and no tension. Physically, you are ready for self-defense training. To prepare mentally: Stand in the small-step posture. Visualize enlarging yourself (自我放大) to be a giant. Visualize your imaginary opponents (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌) are between 3 to 7 feet from you, attacking relentlessly. Mentally execute different maneuvers/techniques to engage your opponents. Always visualize doing these techniques correctly and successfully to reinforce your mind-body synthesis (positive thinking). You may also do realistic crisis rehearsal by mind fighting your way out of different visualized altercations/confrontations. This will establish decision-making references for your *un*-conscious reflexive response in a real confrontation, decreasing your reaction lag time in a real conflict in spite of your fear.

### **Important Notes:**

Do not practice too many different standing postures concurrently. A superficial look at many is inferior to practicing a select few in depth. Remember, the small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩) is a must. “*Motionless-movement*” and mental directed activities must be used to achieve whole-body harmony i.e., if one part of your body moves, it must move as part of your whole-body, never independently, and the whole-body must move in unison automatically. Good relaxed-standing practice must have realistic visualization. Strong focused attention, concentration of mind-intent, is more important than external form.

Yiquan also uses relaxed isometrics to cultivate, develop, and strength (*Qiang Hua*, 强化) your muscular elasticity (*Tan Xing Li*, 弹性力). Through mental imagery and visualization, in every move, you direct your force to act internally in opposing directions and interact with the

surrounding (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力). For example: When you visualize hugging a paper balloon, you must not crush it and you must not let it drop. When you hug your imaginary tree, you prop and open with 30% and simultaneously hug and close with 70% of your force. In other words, every body part includes relaxed isometric forces to maintain the balanced-force. In advance push-hand practice, this is extended to interacting with your partner, each partner exerting just sufficient force to provide a slight resistance to the movement. Working slowly against this slight resistance with large full range motions builds your strength and speed while working against maximum heavy resistance builds your power.

诀曰: 筋肉遒欲放, 螺旋力无形, 关节若机轮, 遍体似弹簧。

Oral Tradition: Always keep muscles and tendons relaxed and poised to discharge force; spiral winding forces are invisible; body joints rotate as wheels and fulcrums; the entire body is elastic like springs.

诀曰: 力应松整, 静松中求, 缓运中解。

To strengthen, improve, and refine the use of your balanced-force, Yiquan trains your neuromuscular coordination to control the impulses to both the prime mover (agonist) and the antagonist muscles, allowing them to relax and perform with minimal antagonistic tension yet retaining the ability to reverse and change the action. Developing, cultivating, and refining your whole-body harmony is a *work-in-process*; continual regular practice is required to maintain your skills and combat readiness. As your neuro-physical abilities change as you advance, this harmony must constantly be re-invented, refined, and maintained through continuous diligent training.

Practice push-hands (*Tui Shou*, 推手) and sparring (*San Shou*, 散手) to enhance automatic reflexive action. Mental visualization does not replace actual physical practice; mental activities only supplement and enhance physical practice. You cannot visualize what you do not know. The actual performance of a maneuver/technique in a conflict depends on the reactions of your opponent and is unpredictable. Learn to react reflexively and spontaneously. Sense, change, and adapt according to your opponent.

Yiquan uses relaxed-standing postures to re-pattern, re-coordinate, and program your mind-body into an integrated, spring-like, whole-body harmony unity to develop this new habit of using force, merging all force components as one (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). In this Chapter, we have presented a guideline. You must evaluate your intended goal and weaknesses, then device a training plan and solutions to your own problems.

Finally, we wish to remind the student to be careful and be honest. If you advance yourself to practice at a level beyond your ability without a solid foundation, you are cheating yourself and

wasting your time. Be sure that you master this training one step at a time. Learn slowly to build a solid foundation so you can advance quickly. Return to and repeat the basic skills (*Ji Ben Gong*, 基本功) exercises as necessary.

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## Chapter 3: Trial-and-Feel (*Shi Li*, 试力)

# 试力

Movement at the “*impact/contact-point*” (*Li Dian*, 力点) is needed to transmit force onto your opponent/target, and harmony of physical actions (*Shu Shi De Li*, 舒适得力) is the prerequisite to discharging/releasing force “*suddenly*” (*Tu Ran Fa Li*, 突然发力) and “*explosively*” (*Bao Fa Nei Jing Wei Wai Li*, 爆发内劲为外力). “Testing for the force” or “*trial-and-feel*” (*Shi Li*, 试力) training and conditioning provides the tool to achieve harmony of physical actions, and it is the means to “*try to figure out*” (*Chuai Mo*, 揣摩) the “*balanced-force*” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) of your intentional movement (*You Yi Yun Dong*, 有意运动).

诀曰：动即是静，静即是动，动静静动互根用。

Oral Tradition: Stillness and movement are coexisting transitional phases of an action; one phase begets the other.

诀曰：习拳静以理其气，动以致其用。

Oral Tradition: Stillness training builds the foundation; movement training is the means to practical application.

During the movement of a maneuver, by mentally induced perception of internal/external “*isometric-opposing-force-pairs*” (*Nei Wai Zheng Li*, 内外争力), you seek, sense, feel, get to know, find out, learn, and experience the balanced-force (*Mo Li*, 摸力). The essence of “*trial-and-feel*” (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercises is synthesizing directed mental activities (visualization) with the instinctive natural intentional physical movements of maneuvers to explore (*trial*) and experience (*feel*) the neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchanges (*Shen Jing Ji Rou Song Jin Zhuan*

*Huan*, 神经肌肉松紧转换) of your whole-body. And through kinesthetic perception of the “path-of-force-propagation” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路) of the force components through different body elements, cultivate and nurture your “balanced-force” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). The goal is to cultivate and learn to use the “balanced-force”, ingraining and strengthening the “path-of-force-propagation” while doing coordinated whole-body motion (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路), making the maneuver into a habit and a spontaneous reflex.

诀曰: 由静求松, 由松求整。

Trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) training is the transition from “stillness” (*Jing*, 静) to “relaxation” (*Song*, 松), and from relaxation to the harmony of the whole-body (*Zheng*, 整) neuromuscular movement (*Dong*, 动). It is the training pathway (试力为得力之由) to sense, perceive, learn, know, explore, experiment, experience, understand, cultivate, develop, and use of the “balanced-force” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). Here, you cultivate and nurture the path-of-force-propagation through your whole-body (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路) by observing and experiencing the sensations of the passage of force through your body elements.

诀曰: 揣摩意中力。

Oral Tradition: Perceive, feel, comprehend, explore, and learn from experience; “look” inwards, “listen” to your body, “read” your muscles; experiment and try to figure out the balanced-force embedded in your intentional neuromuscular movement, mind-intent, and focus concentration.

In this chapter, we present the basic principles of trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) training, and describe in detail the practice of “slow-motion trial-and-feel” exercises. The maneuvers included are not unique; they represent the quintessential training exercises to acquire neuromuscular coordination for harmony of action to ingrain the using of your “balanced-force” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) in the three primary dimensions: forward/backward, upward/downward, and lateral open/close (left/right). We will cover four classes of basic skills (*Ji Ben Gong*, 基本功) trial-and-feel maneuvers:

A. Basic Maneuvers (*Ji Ben Shi Li*, 基本试力)

1. Level push-pull (*Ping Tui Shi Li*, 平推试力) with force dominant in the forward/backward directions.
2. Downward-Press/Upward-Lift (*Fu Chen Shi Li*, 浮沉试力) with force dominant in upward/downward directions.
3. Open-close (*Kai He Shi Li*, 开合试力) with force dominant in the lateral left/right directions.



4. Paddle water (*Bo Shui Shi Li*, 拨水试力) with force dominant in the upward/downward directions.
- B. Push-hands Maneuvers (*Tui Shou Shi Li*, 推手试力)
1. Down-press/Up-Lift (*Fu An Shi Li*, 扶按试力) with force dominant in the upward/downward directions.
  2. Hook/Hang (*Gou Gua Shi Li*, 勾挂试力) with force dominant in the forward/backward directions.
  3. Press/Hang (*Fen Gua Shi Li*, 分挂试力) with force dominant in the lateral left/right directions.
- C. Core/torso (Body Method) Maneuvers (*Shen Fa Shi Li*, 身法试力)
1. Spinning/Turning (*Xuan Fa Shi Li*, 旋法试力) with force dominant in the forward/backward directions.
  2. Waving (*Yao Fa Shi Li*, 摇法试力) with force dominant in the lateral left/right directions.
  3. Bobbing Turtle (*Shen Gui Chu Shui Shi Li*, 神龟出水试力) with force dominant in the upward/downward directions.
- D. Fighting Maneuvers (*San Shou Shi Li*, 散手试力)

We will only briefly touch on the fighting maneuvers/techniques (*San Shou Shi Li*, 散手试力) leaving the details for Chapter 8: Fighting.

The general *Shi Li* (试力) guidelines are: Keep all maneuvers/techniques simplistic (*Fa Yu Jian*, 法欲简). Think (*visualize*), explore (*trial*), experience (*feel*), extrapolate, and experiment; invent, change, and refine; from one maneuver/technique you will know ten thousand maneuvers/techniques. Initially, practice slowly to thoroughly master one maneuver/technique in order to learn others fast (*Huan Yun Zhong Jie*, 缓运中解). Do not try to do everything (i.e., do many different maneuvers or styles); you become effective by being selective (i.e., use the principle of “*simplicity of choice*”). To maximize your innate abilities (*Fa Hui Ben Neng*, 发挥本能), the movements of selected maneuvers should be as close to your natural instinctive movements as possible. Instinctive, natural, subconscious, spontaneous movements are the simplest, quickest, and most accurate while conscious choice reactions take longer. Therefore, you should minimize unnecessary conscious choice reactions and select the

maneuvers/techniques that work for you carefully and practice them repeatedly until they are second nature to you, until the intentional physical actions of the techniques become habit, until your skills become spontaneous reflexes.

## Principles

In relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩), with mental directed activities (*Yi Nian You Dao*, 意念诱导), you practice “motion-in-stillness” (*Jing Zhong Zhi Dong*, 静中之动). It cultivates and develops your balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) by synthesizing your mind-body into a resilient elastic coordinated whole-body harmony unity (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调; *Ti Zheng Ru Zhu*, 体整如铸; *Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一).

诀曰: 遍 体 似 弹 簧。

Oral Tradition: Every body element/component should behave like a spring.

诀曰: 由 静 求 松, 由 松 求 整。

You would sense a thickness to the surrounding air and/or an added heaviness in your torso and limbs (*Shen Ru Qian Guan*, 身如铅灌) when you visualize movement while doing the “motionless-movement” (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动) exercises. This indicates you have acquired rudimentary skills in mind-body relaxation (*Song Zheng*, 松整) and you are beginning to sense and perceive the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). You are ready for “trial-and-feel” (*Shi Li*, 试力) training and conditioning to develop whole-body harmony of physical actions (*Qiu Zheng*, 求整) to synthesize your neuromuscular movements and merge all force components as “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一).

诀曰: 动 即 是 静, 静 即 是 动, 动 静 静 动 互 根 用。

Oral Tradition: Stillness and movement are coexisting transitional phases of an action; one phase begets the other.

诀曰: 静 中 生 动, 动 中 求 静。

Oral Tradition: Beget movement from stillness; seek and retain stillness in movement.

诀曰: 习 拳 静 以 理 其 气, 动 以 致 其 用。

Oral Tradition: Stillness training builds the foundation; movement training is the means to practical application.

Movement is needed to transmit force onto your opponent. However, as your movement actually occurs in physical space and increases in magnitude, you may lose the “feeling of the balanced-force” (*Shen Ru Qian Guan*, 身如铅灌) that you have acquired in relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩). Trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercise is the tool to link (the pathway between) the relatively stationary relaxed-standing postures (*stillness*, *Jing*, 静) and the dynamic maneuvers/techniques of fighting (*Dong*, 动). Its practice presents the “meeting of resistance” and “experiencing of force” (*Ti Yan Zu Li*, 体验阻力): while executing actual physical movement, you visualize “meeting resistance” of your surroundings (*Yu Zhou Zheng Li*, 宇宙争力) and “experiencing force” from internal “isometric-opposing-force-pairs” (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力) with coordinated (neuromuscular) whole-body effort (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一) while keeping proper *connected-ness*, optimal *alignment*, and the *ground path pure* (*Zheng Ti Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 整体连通一贯) to “take up power from the ground”.

诀曰:假借无穷宇宙力。

Oral Tradition: Visualize your actions harmonizing and interacting with the unlimited forces of the surrounding universe.

“Trial-and-feel” (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercises cultivate and nurture harmony of physical actions and forces in maneuvers/techniques by using a whole-body “explore” (*trial*) and “experience” (*feel*) process (*Ti Ren*, 体认). This “seeking process” (*Mo Li*, 摸力) uses kinesthetic perception of the whole-body “isometric-opposing-force-pairs” (*Zheng Ti Zheng Li*, 整体争力) to perceive the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) through awareness of neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) while guiding the movement of the maneuvers/techniques with conscious mind-intent (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力), and synthesizing the neuromuscular pathways of the “*path-of-force-propagation*” through the concurrent sequential overlapping movement of the body elements (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路).

This trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) training and conditioning is perhaps the most important and difficult aspect of Yiquan training. Whether you can or cannot be effective in combat depends on your success or failure in this phase of your training (*Huan Yun Zhong Jie*, 缓运中解); it bridges the gap between relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) and discharge/release of power (*Fa Li*, 发力).

诀曰:力量在身外去求取,意念在无心中操持。

Oral Tradition: Harmonize and interact with your surroundings. Let your mind-body work between conscious-ness and sub-conscious-ness as if nothing critical is

happening. Do not be conscious of specific requirements. Attempt to control your mind-intent *un*-consciously, with no conscious mind-intent, with no conscious effort.

诀曰:外练筋骨皮,关节若机轮,揣摩意中力。

Oral Tradition: Perceive, feel, comprehend, explore, and learn from experience; “look” inwards, “listen” to your body, “read” your muscles; experiment and try to figure out the balanced-force embedded in your intentional neuromuscular movement, mind-intent, and focus concentration.

Relaxed awareness, perception, and feeling of force lead to knowing, experiencing, understanding, and the ability to use your balanced-force. The effective use of your balanced-force employing different maneuvers/techniques is the ultimate goal, but first you must know, understand, explore, experiment, develop, and cultivate whole-body harmony of actions and forces by way of the trial-and-feel of force of “meeting resistance” (*Yu Zhou Zheng Li*, 宇宙争力), synthesizing all your force components as “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一).

诀曰:浑身气力匀整,全身力一。

Oral Tradition: Whole-body harmony of actions and forces is required to merge all different force components as “one”.

You master physical skills by actually doing (modeling in NLP) and mentally visualizing (imaging in NLP) what you are trying to learn (Neuro-Linguistic Programming, NLP). Learn what, why, and how to practice (intellectual knowledge and understanding), then practice what you have learned (motor skills). Principles are useless unless you put them into practice. While repetition is the mother of all skills, realistic training is the key to any expertise. You acquire fighting skills by actually doing and/or reacting with “push-hands” and sparring exercises, not from meretricious solo exercises. Visualization and actual physical practice are both necessary. Skills are converted to spontaneous reflexes with many many “mind-intent guided” (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力) physical and mental repetitions (*You Yi Er Lian*, 有意而练). The only way you get any skill is to practice. Under stress you will revert to movement/maneuvers ingrained into your muscle-memory through training.

诀曰:习之若恒久,不期自然至。

Oral Tradition: With diligent training and conditioning, the movements of maneuvers will “feel natural” and your confidence will increase; skills will become internalized as spontaneous reflexes, requiring no conscious effort to execute.

You must be relaxed and *un*-conscious of your execution of the maneuvers/techniques when you need to use your skills for real (*Wu Yi Er Yong*, 无意而用). Every action/movement of an appropriate *San Shou* (散手) maneuver/technique must be put through the following learning

process: seek and aware, perceive and experience, explore and experiment, understand and adapt, invent and refine, master and forget (*Ti Ren*, 体认). It must become an automatic response (*Zi Dong Hua*, 自动化) performed with no thought from the practitioner.

诀曰: 试力为得力之由, 力由试而得知, 更由知而得其所用。

Oral Tradition: Trial-and-feel is the learning pathway to achieve harmony of actions and forces, to know and comprehend the balanced-force, and to master and use it.

Trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) training and conditioning is “mind-intent guided” (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力) conscious neuromuscular coordination practice (*You Yi Er Lian*, 有意而练) of intentional movements (*Ben Yi Yun Dong*, 本意运动); it is self-exploration (*trial*), self-examination, awareness, perception, experiment, and experiencing (*feel*) of the concurrent sequential overlapping actions of your body elements (*Ti Ren*, 体认). All these intentional movements must be compatible to your instinctive natural physical abilities (*He Yi Yun Dong*, 合意运动).

Yiquan uses *Shi Li* (试力) exercises:

1. To re-pattern your mind-body to work in synch, to use whole-body movements with proper “*body mechanics*” (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) to achieve harmony of actions and forces (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调; *Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一),
2. To cultivate and nurture the paths-of-force-propagation through your whole-body (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路), to merge all force components as one (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一), and
3. To set *sub*-conscious decision-making reference points for your *un*-conscious, instinctive, instantaneous reflexes, cultivating the combat mindset, to convert skills to spontaneous reflexes (*Bu Qi Zi Ran Zhi*, 不期自然至).

诀曰: 力应松整, 静松中求, 缓运中解。

Training your whole-body coordination and neuromuscular skill is a matter of using your mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to guide you to *form* proper connections in your neuro-pathways (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力). Through relaxed slow-motion precision practice of controlled intentional body movements (*You Yi Yun Dong*, 有意运动) with minimum amount of strength (i.e., relaxed antagonistic muscles to the extreme; use no brute strength) and with appropriate visualization (*Yong Yi Bu Yong Li*, 用意不用力), you eliminate the unnecessary motions and muscle contractions, which fatigue without accomplishing any useful purpose, harmonizing your actions and forces, integrating your neuromuscular system as one coordinated unity (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉

如一)。When learning to form these new neuro-pathways, you must be sure the actions are the most “*economical*”, the most efficient use of energy and motion. Do self-examination and always ask: *Why do you do what you do?*

诀曰:合意运动,是基於心意,动作顺乎自然,合乎需要。

The basis of Yiquan is to work with your body's natural responses to develop your spontaneous, instinctive, innate fighting capabilities (*Fa Hui Ben Neng*, 发挥本能). The more a maneuver/technique runs counter to your instinctive natural abilities, the more you have to consciously think about that maneuver/technique in order to accomplish it. It is thus harder for that particular maneuver/technique to be a spontaneous reflex, to become habit. Training a maneuver/technique that is against your instinctive natural abilities is futile because that training would fail under stress. Proper intentional physical movements are necessary to “*explode*” your balanced-force as external force (*Bao Fa Wei Wai Li*, 爆发为外力) and the actions must become spontaneous reflexes to be useful. Simplify your movement, discard all mental distractions, and eliminate all extraneous motions; keep all movement in a maneuver gross and simplistic because you will lose your fine motor skills under stress.

诀曰:法欲简。

Oral Tradition: Keep all maneuvers simplistic.

诀曰:为何有此一动?

Oral Tradition: Why do you do what you do?

Trial-and-feel practice of any maneuver is done in phases: using slow large motions, slow small motions, fast large motions, and fast small motions as well as everything in between, and from different starting positions. Proper body *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong*, 连通), optimal *alignment*, taking up power from the ground, and guided by mind-intent are necessary prerequisites. You use slow large relaxed motions to develop *comfortable natural ease* of movement (*Qiu Shu Zhan*, 求舒展), perceiving, learning, exploring, and experiencing the concurrent sequential overlapping linkage of the actions (*Ti Ren*, 体认), achieving harmony of physical actions (*Qiu Shu Zhan Lian Tong*, 求舒展连通). Then, you use slow small motions (*Qiu Jin Cou*, 求紧凑), switching between maneuvers, to develop “*agility*”, transient ability, and the quick rate of change (*Qiu Xu Ling Bian Hua*, 求虚灵变化). Then, use opposites (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力); visualize imaginary strong springs connecting various body elements in fast large motions to strengthen (*Qiang Hua*, 强化) each maneuver, to achieve harmony of forces (*De Li*, 得力). Then, practice fast small motions, rapidly switching between maneuvers to develop fast contraction (relaxation/tension exchange) and core/torso oscillation (*Zheng Ti Gu Dang*, 整体鼓荡) abilities to develop the elastic “*spring-like forces*” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) and the fast transient response.

诀曰：应机而发，因势而变。

Finally, you must practice to sense, adapt, and change according to your opponent, be able to execute maneuvers from any position, be *form-less* (*Xing Wu Xing*, 形无形) and *method-less* (*Yi Wu Yi*, 意无意) by mixing free-step (*Huo Bu*, 活步) with various combinations of maneuvers (*Zong He Shi Li*, 综合试力).

诀曰：有形练到无形处，练到无形是真功。

Oral Tradition: Practice and develop your maneuver/technique with proper external form; change, adapt, and refine it until it becomes form-less. A maneuver/technique is most effective when it is form-less and spontaneous.

To understand a maneuver/technique, you must explore and experiment with it through this *Shi Li* (试力) process; take it to the extremes and examine its opposites. To be useful, skills must become spontaneous reflexes.

诀曰：关节若机轮，揣摩意中力。

Oral Tradition: Keep all joints flexible; perceive, feel, comprehend, explore, and learn from experience; look inwards, listen to your body, read your muscles; experiment and try to figure out the balanced-force embedded in your intentional neuromuscular movement, mind-intent, and focus concentration.

诀曰：一动无不动，一动全身转，螺旋力无形。

Always use proper *body mechanics* (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直) and visualization in trial-and-feel training. Be sure to use the actions of your core/torso to “drive” the actions of your arms and legs (*Shen Cui Dong Shou*, 身催动手); merge the actions of every body element into one comfortable natural harmonized whole-body movement (*Shu Shi Xie Tiao*, 舒适协调). When any one element moves, it must move only as part of your whole-body, never independently; your hands, feet, torso, and mind all move in unison as every body element affects the whole-body (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动). Simultaneously, the natural winding of your musculature should be used to induce “*not readily visible*” natural spirals, rotations, and twisting of your torso and limbs (*Yi Dong Quan Shen Zhuan*, 一动全身转). These *drilling* (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋) movements are used to change force directions in a strike (*Gai Bian Li Xiang*, 改变力向). For example, your vertical gravitational acceleration (*Zhong Li Bo*, 重力波) may be converted to forward/backward and/or lateral left/right forces (*Dang Chu Zong Heng Bo*, 荡出纵横波).

诀曰：有意而练，无意而用。

Be sure to perceive, comprehend, explore, experience, experiment, and train with a purpose; practice with mindfulness. Set doable goals and device training methods/schedules to reach them. Learn why, what, and how to practice then practice what you have learned (*You Fa Er Lian*, 有法而练). Perceive and kinesthetically experience the concurrent sequential overlapping linkages of the components of the actions to ingrain the neuromuscular coordination for harmony of physical motions for each maneuver/technique.

诀曰：心领神会，体认操存。

Oral Tradition: Understand the principles involved and put them into practice; perceive, explore, experiment, and experience the neuromuscular coordination to ingrain the maneuver as habit; with the mind and body working in synch, the movement flows with no conscious effort, become second nature.

诀曰：习之若恒久，不期自然至，变化形无形，周旋意无意。

诀曰：待到自动化阶段才能够谈到应用。

Oral Tradition: *Shi Li* movements (试力运动) must be practiced until they become completely spontaneous and reflexive, requiring no conscious thought and effort from the aspired trainee.

### **Trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) and Balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力)**

When you have practiced relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) correctly and have synthesized your mind-body as “one” (*Ti Zheng Ru Zhu*, 体整如铸), you will sense resistance or heaviness in your limbs (*Shen Ru Qian Guan*, 身如铅灌). You should perceive a frictional drag of the surrounding air or feeling of resistance on your body (*Ti Cha Zu Li*, 体察阻力). In the early stage of your training, this perceived feeling of resistance is not strong, but with diligent practice it becomes increasingly obvious. You can feel/sense/perceive this resistance when you mentally visualize and practice “*motionless-movement*” during relaxed-standing. However, when you increase or enlarge your movement, you typically lose the feeling. Further development of your balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) in *Shi Li* involves visualizing imaginary springs between various body elements (internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs, *Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力) in conjunction with that of sensing force and resistance (external isometric-opposing-force-pairs, *Shen Wai Zheng Li*, 身外争力 or *Yu Zhou Zheng Li*, 宇宙争力) with your surroundings as you move your body as a harmonized whole-body unity (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体谐调). Note that mind-intent and visualization are used to guide and



“induce” these neuromuscular coordination and kinesthetic perception in *Shi Li* exercises (*Yi Nian You Dao*, 意念诱导).

The trial-and-feel training (*Shi Li*, 试力) attempts to extend and retain the feeling of “meeting resistance” so you can still perceive this balanced-force while your body is in motion (*Mo Li*, 摸力). Then, by gradually working against visualized (imagined) external resistance in multiple dimensions (e.g., imagine moving about in a room full of molasses), you hone your ability to *meet resistance* with a whole-body effort (*Ti Cha Zu Li*, 体察阻力) thereby laying a foundation for whole-body harmony of forces (*Ba Li Shi Chu*, 把力试出). You must not lose your feel of the internal opposites (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力) while trying to perceive and feel the interactions with the external opposites (*Shen Wai Zheng Li*, 身外争力). Move naturally, do not be conscious of the specific requirements while doing *Mo Li* (摸力) to sense, seek, explore, and cultivate the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). Whole-body harmony is instinctive, natural, and “effort-less”. Harmony of physical actions to coordinating and merging all your neuromuscular actions as “one” (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一) is prerequisite to harmony of forces to coordinating and merging all force components as “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一), and to “explosively” releasing/discharging of power/force (*Bao Fa Wei Wai Li*, 爆发为外力).

诀曰：顺生于自然，不觉其力也，故谓之浑元。

Oral Tradition: When your mind-intent, neuromuscular coordination, and physical actions are harmonized and merged as “one”, the force is called the balanced-force. This balanced-force is spontaneous, instinctive, natural, and requires no conscious thought and effort.

## **Trial-and-feel and *Un*-conscious Decision-making Reference**

In hand-to-hand fighting, conscious procedural thinking (serial processing) is a surefire formula for defeat.

诀曰：若以目之所见，一再思察，然后出手以应敌，鲜有不败者。

Oral Tradition: In a hand-to-hand confrontation, if you consciously observe, analyze, and then decide on how to response, your chance of victory is very slim.

Actions to be completed in a compressed time frame (as in hand-to-hand fighting) are best relegated to your powerful *un*-conscious mind (parallel processing). Your *un*-conscious decisions are based on what you *observe* and perceive; how you *orient* that perception and the time allowed. Your brain *un*-consciously recalls prior experience as meaningful reference points

to make *decisions* and to *act* (OODA loop – John Boyd). With no prior decision-making reference points, you will become disoriented, you “freeze”.

诀曰:有意运动,是基於心意,动作顺乎自然,合乎需要,作到妙处,则成为自动运动,不感觉受意之支配而无有不合意者。

Oral Tradition: Though all your actions are initiated in your mind, they must be instinctive, natural, and appropriate. When the proper neuromuscular coordination is ingrained, the intentional actions become spontaneous reflexes; with your mind and body working in synch, the actions flow with no conscious thought or effort.

In other words, you fight like you train; hence, you must train like you fight. You need realistic training, actual physical sparring, and crisis rehearsal (mental imaging: playing movies in your mind) to create valid mental reference points. The latter is accomplished by role-playing visualization: mentally sparring with imaginary opponents (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌) when doing solo trial-and-feel exercises (*Dan Cao Shou Shi Li*, 单操手试力) with specific practical maneuvers/techniques, visualize using the technique correctly and successfully. By using relaxed slow-motion actions and internalizing the correct execution of the movements of the maneuver/technique, you ingrain the skills to become spontaneous reflexes. Role-playing gets control of and overcomes your “*startled response*”, allows you to learn “controlled loss of discipline”, prepares you to take action with a shorter lag time. Always visualize doing the techniques successfully, think positively. Be realistic with your ability and keep relaxed.

诀曰:平时练习如临大敌之象,交手时有人若无人之境。

Oral Tradition: In training, mentally rehearse sparring with your strongest opponent. In a real encounter, rely on your *un-conscious* competence; execute the proper techniques at the proper time as if there is no opponent.

诀曰:习之若恒久,不期自然至,变化形无形,周旋意无意。

A large number of slow relaxed physical and mental repetitions done correctly are necessary to ingrain a technique as *un-conscious* competence, as spontaneous reflex. Slow is smooth; smooth is fast. Repetition is the mother of all skills.

诀曰:达到无感觉受意运动,是有意无意间之运动。

The trial of force training (*trial-and-feel*) conditions your reflexes, eventually allowing you to deliver the balanced-force from any impact/contact point at will with your harmonized spring-like whole-body actions by taking up power from the ground.

诀曰:再达到本能自动运动之境。

When skills become spontaneous reflexes, augment this by actual sparring because you must learn to adapt to the unpredictable reactions of real opponents without revealing your true mind-intent, switching between maneuvers at a faster tempo than your opponent to defeat him. This is Yiquan's time-based fast transient tactics. (More about this in Chapter 8: Fighting.)

诀曰：若能出手而得已发未发时机之扼要，则非久经实作之惯手难能得也。

Oral Tradition: Push-hands and sparring practices are the most direct paths to gain real fighting experiences. Mastery of timing, attack angle, fighting measure, and control of engagement opportunities can only come from prolong diligent push-hands and sparring practices.

诀曰：意不有象。

Oral Tradition: Do not let your external forms and movements reveal your true intent.

### Characteristics of Trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) Maneuvers

诀曰：动静处中，顺乎自然，合乎需要，应机而发，因势而变，能守能用。

By definition, *Shi Li* (试力) is conscious self-exploration, self-examination, neuromuscular perception, and harmony of physical actions training and conditioning. The goal is achieving whole-body harmony of physical actions and forces (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体谐调). You must practice *Shi Li* (试力) procedures with every one of your selected maneuver/technique. Keep in mind that the basis of Yiquan is to work with your body's spontaneous response to develop your innate fighting capabilities (*Ben Neng Zi Dong Yun Dong*, 本能自动运动). The more a maneuver/technique runs counter to your instinctive natural abilities (complicated maneuvers), the more you have to think about that maneuver/technique in order to accomplish it. So, keep all maneuvers simplistic (*Fa Yu Jian*, 法欲简). And what is instinctive natural for one person may not be for another. Choose carefully. You become effective by being selective; you must select, explore, and experiment; change, invent, and refine. When selecting a maneuver/technique, always ask: Why are you doing it? What is the purpose? Are the actions the most economical as well as the most efficient use of energy and motion? Eliminate all unnecessary physical motions and negative mental distractions. Employ momentum to overcome resistance, but reduce momentum if it must be overcome by muscular effort. Use gravity as ally. Training a maneuver/technique that is against your instinctive natural abilities is futile because that training would fail under stress (keep it simple). A short list of guiding characteristics for selecting appropriate maneuver/technique is as follows:

1. Use curved (bent, not straight) physical form to deliver linear (straight, direct) balanced-force (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直); always keep all joints flexible between 90 and 180 degrees (*Guan Jie Ling Huo*, 关节灵活).

诀曰:回以蓄劲,伸以发力,回伸须致用,遍体似弹簧。

诀曰:曲蓄部位产生阻止变形之弹性力,即爆发之为炸力。

Contract (bend) your joints to store energy/strength, and flex (extend) your joints to release force. Every contraction or extension must have a purpose. When in use, every element of your whole-body should compress and expand like springs (*Bian Ti Si Tan Huang*, 遍体似弹簧). Under external applied forces, all your slightly bent joints would develop spring-like elastic forces, resisting deformation, and react by “exploding” your internal strength as external forces (*Bao Fa Wei Zha Li*, 爆发为炸力).

2. Use whole-body movement.

诀曰:一动无不动,全身力一。

When moving a body element/component, let it move only as part of your whole-body, never independently, every element in your body (hands, feet, torso, head, and mind) must move in unison, in harmony. Merge all force components as one.

3. Use natural whole-body spiral/helical movement.

诀曰:一动全身转,多面螺旋。

Every movement involves “drilling” (*Zuan*, 钻) with your legs, pivoting of the torso, twisting of arms (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋), and rotating of your joints (*Guan Jie Ruo Ji Lun*, 关节若机轮) and all other winding elements of your body to direct your force (*Duo Mian Luo Xuan*, 多面螺旋). However, the embedded spiral/rotation must be invisible (*Luo Xuan Li Wu Xing*, 螺旋力无形). *Drilling* (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋) movement adds power, converts vertical gravity to horizontal forces (*Zhong Li Bo Dang Chu Cong Heng Bo*, 重力波荡出丛横波) and enables you to change force directions in mid-course (*Gai Bian Li Xiang*, 改变力向).

4. Take up power from the ground; keep the ground path pure.

诀曰:舒展连通,整体协调。

Use appropriate relaxation/tension, optimal *connected-ness* and *alignment* to maximize the effectiveness of your path-of-force-propagation (*Jing Lu Tong Chang*, 劲路通畅) from the ground to the contact/impact point (*Li Dian*, 力点).

5. Maintain integrity of your *frame* (*Jian Jia*, 肩架) with musculoskeletal support.

诀曰: 形不破体, 意不有象, 力不出尖。

Keep your hands and forearms in your “*comfort zone*”: left hand does not cross over the central line to your right, right hand does not cross over the central line to your left, do not raise hands higher than your eye brows, do not lower hands below your navel, do not extend hands laterally beyond your shoulders, do not push beyond your front toe (except when releasing power), and do not let your arms touch your torso.

Novice should initially adhere to the physical form (*Xing Shi*, 形式) of the sequential pattern of movement of each maneuver and use mind-intent to lead/guide/direct your force (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力). Visualize external resistance (e.g., imagine moving in molasses) and internal isometric-opposing-forces (e.g., visualize imaginary springs between body elements) and do the movement with relaxed comfortable motion. Do not use brute strength; use just enough force to meet the mentally induced resistance (*Yun Jing Ru Chou Si*, 运劲如抽丝). Do not relax completely and be slacken (*Song Er Bu Xie*, 松而不懈) but avoid being tense and rigid (*Jin Er Bu Jiang*, 紧而不僵). Practice slowly to thoroughly understand and master each maneuver/technique (*Huan Yun Zhong Jie*, 缓运中解) so you can learn new ones fast. Look inwards, listen to your body, read your muscles; feel, perceive, and kinesthetically experience the concurrent sequential overlapping movement of each body element contributing to merging all force components as “one”.

诀曰: 把力试出。

Use kinesthetic perception of mentally induces internal/external isometric-opposing-force-pairs to nurture your neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange to strengthen the paths-of-force-propagation (*Jing Lu*, 劲路). Take each maneuver to the extremes and examine its opposites; explore and experiment, change, refine and invent; from one maneuver, you will know ten thousand maneuvers; you must add to what is given in order to advance beyond the fundamentals.

诀曰: 一势可变千百势。

Oral Tradition: One maneuver can develop into thousands of maneuvers.

诀曰: 非至於自动运动之境, 不能得力得气得神而入化境。

Oral Tradition: Before any maneuver/technique is useful, your skills must become spontaneous (automatic) reflexes i.e., you must be able to perform the proper action at the proper time as a spontaneous reflex with no conscious thought or effort.

## Methods and Procedures

When practicing any *Shi Li* maneuver, remember the aim of trial-and-feel exercises is not to learn the sequential movement patterns of a maneuver/technique but to cultivate and nurture the balanced-force, to develop the path-of-force-propagation (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路), and to lay the foundation to be able to “explode” your internal power as “burst” of external force with the maneuver (*Bao Fa Wei Wai Li*, 爆发为外力). Using proper whole-body mechanics, start practicing every new *Shi Li* maneuver with large, smooth, even, slow movement; do not use brute force/strength. Your training should emphasize the awareness and attention to the kinesthetic perception of the transmission of forces through the concurrent sequential overlapping movement of your body parts to deliver the balanced-force (*Zhao Jing*, 找劲). Begin with slow large movement to ingrain the motion into muscle memory to achieve whole-body harmony of movement (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调). Then practice slow small movement to develop *agility*, the ability to switch between maneuvers. However, to be able to “explode” your internal power as external force onto your opponent, you must practice power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力). The rapidity of neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchanges (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) contributes significantly to the *sudden-ness* and *explosive-ness* (*Jing Zha*, 惊炸) of the power discharge/release. Therefore, trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercises must include slow large movement, slow small movement, fast large movement, and fast small movement practices to cultivate the ability to discharge your balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) from any position at will (*Sui Shi Fa Li*, 随时发力).

诀曰: 锻炼是在无力中求有力, 在微动中求迅速, 一用力身心便紧, 百骸失灵。

Oral Tradition: Training and conditioning is to learn and master the balanced-force from using no brute strength, to acquire power and speed from whole-body harmony of actions and forces. Use mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to lead/guide your actions; do not use brute force/strength because it induces tension and rigidity, it destroys whole-body harmony.

诀曰: 由静求松, 由松求整。

诀曰: 松则动作灵速, 紧则力发雄浑。

Repetition is the mother of all skills. It takes several hundred thousand repetitions of a maneuver/technique before it becomes an automatic *un*-conscious response; becomes habit; becomes second nature. The key is to begin with slow relaxed large motion repetitions with mentally visualized resistance. Keep relaxed at all times; move with minimal muscular tension (relaxed antagonist muscles and use no brute strength). Do not force the “action”; let your body move naturally, it is better to be too light than too heavy.

诀曰：勿忘勿助长，切忌身心用力。

Power and speed will come when the movements of your body elements and components of forces merge into an integrated harmony (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). When the movement feels natural, skills eventually become spontaneous reflexes.

When you have achieved whole-body coordinated movement in fixed-step (*Ding Bu*, 定步), advance to practice free-step (*Huo Bu*, 活步) training and conditioning. Practice fast large motions, slow and fast small motions, and finally mixing large and small motions interspersed with tensed (hard) focusing. Here *Shi Li* (试力) overlaps/merges into *Fa Li* (发力) and solo crisis rehearsal (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌) exercise categories. While whole-body harmony of actions and forces is the final goal (*Quan Shen Xie Tiao*, 全身协调), each type of *Shi Li* has different emphasis. Let us explain each category briefly before we describe actual maneuvers.

#### A. Slow relaxed large motions *Shi Li*: to achieve *harmony of actions, alignment, and connected-ness*

诀曰：缓运中解，静松中求。

Relax and do slow-motion trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercises with utmost freedom, with *comfortable natural ease* of movement, with kinesthetic perception of isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Zheng Li*, 争力). Practice each maneuver slowly and evenly, guided by mind-intent (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力), kinesthetically perceiving the neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchanges (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) in every part of your body, developing the “path-of-force-propagation” for the maneuver (*Jing Lu*, 劲路). Do not use any brute strength, relax antagonist muscles (*Yong Yi Bu Yong Li*, 用意不用力); keep all joints mildly extended, flexible, and relaxed (*Guan Jie Ling Huo*, 关节灵活) to achieve optimal *alignment* and proper *connected-ness* (*Xian Qiu Shu Zhan Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 先求舒展连通一贯); use mind-intent to lead/guide your movement and always move with relaxed coordinated whole-body effort (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动) with appropriate winding of torso and limbs (*Yi Dong Quan Shen Zhuan*, 一动全身转). Visualize all movement are “*hindered*” by some subtle resistance, e.g., visualize you are moving in a room of molasses (*Shen Wai Zheng Li*, 身

外争力)。By concentrating and letting your mind-body *experience* (*Ti Ren*, 体认) the moves repeatedly, you program your brain (bio-computer) to coordinate your body to move in a harmonized, spring-like whole-body fashion. Learn to trust your subconscious mind-body feedback to remember the correct whole-body harmony. Once you have acquired the “*feeling*”, do not be overly conscious of the requirements, let it work at a level below conscious-ness; do not hinder it with conscious effort (*Wu Wang Wu Zhu Zhang*, 勿忘勿助长). Hold the visual image in your mind and let your conscious mind “*train*” your *un*-conscious mind. Instead of trying to achieve whole-body harmony, pretend that you have already mastered it.

诀曰：舒展连通，动静处中，顺乎自然，合乎需要，动作谐调。

Oral Tradition: Use proper body mechanics (optimal alignment and connected-ness); be comfortable and natural; seek harmony of actions.

诀曰：慢忧於快，缓胜於急。

Oral Tradition: In this training, slow motion is superior to fast motion. Slow is smooth; smooth is fast.

If you speed up before you are ready, you will introduce errors into your actions.

诀曰：力量在身外去求取，意念在无心中操持。

Oral Tradition: Harmonize and interact with your surroundings. Let your mind-body work between conscious-ness and sub-conscious-ness as if nothing critical is happening. Do not be conscious of specific requirements. Attempt to control your mind-intent *un*-consciously, with mind-less mind, with no conscious thought or effort.

诀曰：以意领力，意到力到，意力不分。

Oral Tradition: Initially, use mind-intent to lead your force; then achieve simultaneity by making them “arrives simultaneously”; eventually, mind-intent and force will merge into one, become inseparable and indistinguishable.

Your hands (the skin on your arms and hands) are most sensitive to external resistance. Initially you should feel friction with or feel a sense of heaviness in your hands. When you can feel with your hands, slowly attempt to feel with your entire body. Move very slowly, but do not hesitate or stop. Do not localize your movement to a single body element; always move in a whole-body unison fashion (every joint should flex slightly with even the tiniest movement).

While paying attention to external isometric-opposing-force-pairs, it is important to be aware of and perceive internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力) between different body elements when you do trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercises. Initially, you



should focus your primary attention and mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) on *experiencing* the isometric-opposing-force-pair in the dominant force dimension (*Er Zheng Li*, 二争力). For example, when you move your arms forward, simultaneously feel a force directed backward. Similarly, when you move your hands backwards, feel a force directed forward. Though each maneuver specifically emphasizes a dominant force dimension, motions in all (six) directions are always present, and the external and internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs in all (six) physical directions must always be balanced (*Gong Zheng Yi Zhong*, 共争一中). That is, this feeling of two forces moving in opposing directions simultaneously (*Er Zheng Li*, 二争力) should exist in every part of your body. Internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs exists everywhere, they allow you to easily change and adapt (*Bian Hua*, 变化) at will according to your opponent's action. You nurture these by visualizing stretching or compressing imaginary springs connecting various elements of your body. Eventually, you must extend your mind-intent (*Yi*, 意), awareness, and kinesthetic perception to include all isometric-opposing-force-pairs between every one of your body elements; each force must have an intentionally induced opposite to maintain equilibrium (*Shun Li Ni Xing*, 顺力逆行).

诀曰：顺力逆行。

Oral Tradition: While doing an action, use minimum force, contracting your primary movers (agonist) muscles while relaxing your antagonist muscles but always retain the ability to use the antagonist muscles to reverse direction or stop the action. Every force must have a mentally and intentionally induced opposite to maintain equilibrium.

诀曰：骨骼毛发都要支撑，放，争，敛，互，为。

Oral Tradition: Use skeletal support and relaxed musculature; pay special attention to the apparent antagonist actions (isometric-opposing-forces) implicit in all your movements, e.g., stretch your arm while withdrawing your trapezius muscles, etc. They are transitional phases of opposites.

## B. Slow relaxed small motions: to improve *agility*, develop core/torso oscillation

Slow and small intentional motion *Shi Li* are effective for improving “*agility*” (*Ling Huo Bian Hua*, 灵活变化) and spontaneous reflex (*Fan Ying*, 反应). When you use fast motions, it is easy for you to gloss over the action and/or miss the proper *body mechanics*; your body does not feel, perceive, and experience the harmony of action and force. Slow and small movements require a higher degree of attention and focused concentration, allowing you to experience the interaction of switching between maneuvers, improving your *agility*. Do the motions slowly to enhance the “*feeling*”. Think, feel, explore, experiment, and learn from experience (*Ti Ren Cao Cun*, 体认操存).

诀曰:动愈微而神愈全。

Oral Tradition: More attention and focused concentration are required for the slower, smaller motions.

诀曰:大动不如小动,快动不如慢动。

Oral Tradition: In this training and conditioning phase, large movement is inferior to small movement; quick movement is inferior to slow movement.

Use mental activity to direct your movement (use mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to guide your actions) and synthesize your physical effort into a whole-body harmony (*Shu Shi Zi Ran*, 舒适自然). “Drill” your legs to take up power from the ground (*Tui Si Zuan*, 腿似钻); use core/torso movement to “drive” your arms (*Shen Cui Dong Shou*, 身催动手). Start and finish each maneuver/technique with utmost freedom, with very small “amplitude” intentional core/torso oscillation (*Zheng Ti Gu Dang*, 整体鼓荡). While keeping your body balanced, optimally *aligned*, properly *connected*, and relaxed, practice with *comfortable natural ease* to seek/sense the neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) to nurture/cultivate the “path-of-force-propagation” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路) for every movement of the maneuver. Do not use any brute strength, visualize your desired results and use “small circles” to switch between movements of the maneuver. This builds the foundation for development of the elastic “spring-like force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) and spontaneous reflex (*Fan Ying*, 反应). Feel, perceive, explore, and experience (*Ti Ren Cao Cun*, 体认操存) the whole-body balanced-force even with the smallest movement. Initially, focus your mind-intent to lead your movement and balanced-force. Eventually, you will achieve simultaneity, be able to mentally direct your balanced-force so that mind-intent and balanced-force become merged into “one”, simultaneous, inseparable, and indistinguishable. Finally, as you reduce the magnitude of your motion, this will merge into relaxed-standing exercise.

### C. Fast relaxed large motions: to *strengthen* the discharge/release of power/force

When doing a maneuver, within the limitation of the natural movement of all your joints, the elastic spring-like force (*Tan Xing Li*, 弹性力) capable of being generated is directly proportional to the magnitude of the contraction or the extension of the primary mover (agonist) muscles of the movement. By practicing a maneuver/technique with fast large motions, you can “strengthen” (*Qiang Hua*, 强化) and increase the “sudden-ness” (*Tu Ra*, 突然) and “explosive-ness” (*Bao Fa*, 爆发) of discharging your internal power as external balanced-force (*Ba Li Da Dao Shen Wai*, 把力打到身外).

NOTES: Large number of repetitions with light resistance cultivates strength and speed; repetitions with maximum resistance develop power and endurance; aerobic training interspersed with “*burst in time intervals*” training during which you push your limit builds stamina and endurance.

诀曰:练习时运行之幅度应大些以增强爆发力之直射强度。

Oral Tradition: During conditioning and training of a maneuver/technique, use larger motions than in a real application of the maneuver/technique to strengthen and develop the sudden-ness and explosive-ness of its power release/discharge.

Feel and perceive the concurrent sequential overlapping motions contributing to accelerating your impact/contact point, propagating the force from pushing off the ground (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯). Visualize the interaction of the internal/external isometric-opposing-forces to strength your action (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争) and nurture your “path-of-force-propagation”. Theoretically, you should visualize imaginary connecting springs between every body element. However, initially this presents too many imaginary springs for your mind to handle. Therefore, you should concentrate on the principal ones between your head and feet (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力), between your knees (*Qian Hou Zheng Li*, 前后争力), between your wrists (*Kai He Zheng Li*, 开合争力), and between your wrists and the back of your neck. When you can feel these, then add others: between hips and knees, hands and feet, etc. Do not neglect to integrate the inertial/momentum forces arising from the dynamic swinging (*Dong Dang*, 动荡) and pivoting of your body, and from the weight shifts of your core/torso oscillations (*Gu Dang*, 鼓荡 or *Zhen Dong*, 震动) into your strikes. Make gravity, inertia, momentum, and angular momentum your allies. Synthesize and merge all forces as “one”.

诀曰:全身力一,力量协调。

Oral Tradition: Merge all force components as one to harmonize actions and forces.

NOTES: This training will evolve into the power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力) exercises. However, to be useful, you must make each maneuver into spontaneous reflex.

诀曰:非至於自动运动之境,不能得力得气得神而入化境。

Oral Tradition: Before any maneuver/technique is useful, your skills must become automatic spontaneous reflexes i.e., you must be able to perform the proper action at the proper time spontaneously with no conscious thought or effort.

D. Fast relaxed small motions: to develop *fast transient response*, “spring-like force” and spontaneous reflex

You must mentally induce isometric-opposing-force-pairs to try to feel the neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange of your whole-body movement to explore the path-of-force-propagation to take up power from the ground (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) even with the smallest movement of your impact/contact point. Let the smallest move of any body element move only as part of your whole-body, never independently, every element must move in unison. Use small magnitude motion to switch between maneuvers, to improve *agility* and *fast transient response*, to develop the elastic spring-like contraction ability and experience the forces arising from your whole-body core/torso oscillation (*Gu Dang*, 鼓荡 or *Zhen Dong*, 震动). The elastic “spring-like force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) can not be developed from large magnitude movement; it can only be cultivated from whole-body small amplitude high frequency core/torso oscillation training (*Cong Zheng Ti Dong Dang Zhong Qiu Tan Li*, 从整体动荡中求弹力). Always, maintain harmony of physical actions and forces in your practice. Cultivate the ability to “explosively” discharge/release your balanced-force with very small movement (*Quan Da Cun Jing*, 拳打寸劲).

诀曰：拳打丈外不为远，近者只在一寸中。

Oral Tradition: Your blows should be felt before it is seen. Long punches may cover more than ten feet but short ones may be delivered within an inch.

诀曰：不必远求尚美观，只在眼前寸间变。

Oral Tradition: Do not seek solutions/answers in large spectacular movement; concentrate on the most important actions happening just inches in front of your eyes.

NOTES: Fast small motion trial-and-feel exercise synthesizes relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩), trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力), and power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力).

E. Mixed relaxed (soft) and focused (hard) motions: to develop *explosive release*

Here, the *Shi Li* (试力) exercises merge with *Fa Li* (发力) and “crises rehearsal” (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌) exercises. Initiating from any position, stopping at any position, mix and combine different maneuvers freely, train to be able to suddenly *Fa Li* at any time and at any position (*Sui Shi Fa Li*, 随时发力). Regardless of the magnitude of the motion, be sure all movements are harmonized whole-body movements (*Li Ying Song Zheng*, 力应松整), with the proper

*connected-ness*, with optimal *alignment*, and with the “*path-of-force-propagation*” pure, taking up power from the ground.

诀曰:松则动作灵速,紧则力发雄浑。

诀曰:有形练到无形处,练到无形是真功。

Oral Tradition: Practice and develop your maneuver/technique with proper external “form”; change, adapt, and refine it until it becomes “form-less”. A maneuver/technique is most effective when it is “form-less”.

诀曰:有形至无形,有意至无意,是入层次上境界之途,强求不达,习之若恒久,不期自然至,不可急躁。

Oral Tradition: You must advance from having “form” to “form-less-ness” in sequential levels/steps. There is no short cut; the only way is to synthesize your mind-body with many physical and mental repetitions until skills become spontaneous reflexes.

诀曰:习之若恒久,不期自然至,变化形无形,周旋意无意。

Oral Tradition: Act spontaneously without your opponent being aware of your actions, be versatile and flexible; maneuver *un*-consciously with “mind-less mind”, do not be afraid to change your tactics.

诀曰:力量在身外去求取,意念在无心中操持。

Oral Tradition: Seek balanced-force from interacting and harmonizing with the surrounding. Attempt to control and maintain your visualization (imagery) with your *un*-conscious mind with no conscious thought or effort.

When the movements feel natural and your confidence increases, the skills are then internalized, converted to spontaneous reflexes; mind and body works in synch, and movements flow without conscious thought or effort. However, this cannot be achieved by robotic repetitive training, i.e., mechanically repeating certain physical movements; you must practice with purpose and *Yi* (*You Yi Er Lian*, 有意而练) and synthesize your mind-body with your neuromuscular actions (动作必须和意念配合). Mind and body must become “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一).

诀曰:待到自动化阶段才能够谈到应用。

诀曰:操拳能作到不用心处方好。

Oral Tradition: In *Shi Li* training and conditioning of a maneuver/technique, instead of trying to satisfy all the requirements, pretend you have mastered them and perform the

maneuver/technique with freedom and no conscious mind-intent or effort, between conscious-ness and *un*-conscious-ness.

To be useful, *Shi Li* (试力) exercises must be synthesized with footwork (using both fixed-step and free-step for every maneuver). Because relaxed “slow-motion trial-and-feel” is the foundation for all *Shi Li* (试力) training and conditioning, we will explore and re-visit its practice in more detail below.

## Relaxed Slow-motion Trial-and-feel

诀曰:力应松整,静松中求,缓运中解。

Oral Tradition: In use, you must discharge/release your balanced-force with relaxed actions, high speed, and whole-body effort. While the foundation to explore, cultivate, and develop this ability is relaxed-standing, you will find the solutions for harmony of actions and forces (merging force components as one) in relaxed slow-motion trial-and-feel training.

诀曰:缓求速至,慢中得快。

Oral Tradition: Slow is smooth, smooth is fast; speed is achieved through eliminating all unnecessary movements and mental distractions.

诀曰:锻炼时要永远保持意力不断的虚灵挺拔,轻松均整,以达到舒适得力为原则。

Oral Tradition: In your training, you must always maintain your mind-intent and focus concentration to mildly push your head upward and your feet downward, slightly elongating your spine. Use skeletal support to achieve whole-body neuromuscular harmony and comfortable natural ease of movement. Use appropriate neuromuscular relaxation and tension.

With proper skeletal support (*Gu Ge Zhi Cheng*, 骨骼支撑), *connected-ness*, and optimal *alignment* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯), using mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to guide your relaxed neuromuscular movement, you achieve comfortable natural whole-body coordination (*Shu Zhan Lian Tong*, 舒展连通). By mentally inducing, perceiving, and use of internal/external opposites (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力), through neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange, you try to cultivate the path-of-force-propagation (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路) and harmonize your whole-body physical actions and forces (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体谐调). When

doing these neuromuscular intentional movement (*You Yi Hun Dong*, 有意运动) exercises to perceive, achieve, cultivate, and develop whole-body harmony (*Qiu Zheng*, 求整), you must keep these points in mind:

1. Paying too much attention to external physical form (*Xing Si*, 形似) distracts you. Looking inwards, neuromuscular perception (feel), self-exploration (trial), and kinesthetically experiencing with your whole-body (*Ti Ren*, 体认) are more important than imitating external physical form (modeling in NLP). Therefore, do not practice in front of a mirror; it distracts your attention.
2. Pay attention and concentrate on learning from experience. Focus your mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to direct and guide your movement (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力). Do not use any brute strength (relaxing antagonist muscles); keep appropriately relaxed at all times (动静处中). When primary mover (agonist) muscles are unopposed, the movements are freer, smoother, easier, and more accurate. Mental directed activities must be realistic (imaging must be real); visualize something that you have actually experienced. Do not lose your attention at the turns connecting the beginning and ending of each movement segment (use small circles to connect and to switch between maneuvers).
3. Keep your eyes focused on a target or visualize fighting an imaginary opponent. Do not look down.
4. Use the natural spiral winding of your musculature to do *drilling*, twisting spiral/helical movement with smooth lines (*Zuan Fan Luo Xuan*, 钻翻螺旋).

诀曰：一 动 全 身 转。

Move slowly with easy natural rhythm and “invisible rotations” (*Luo Xuan Li Wu Xing*, 螺旋力无形). Do not hesitate or stop, eliminate temporary cessation of motions. Slow motion allows you to notice errors and correct them (缓运中解). Connect large sweeping movement with small circular movement (小圈转关). Continuous curved motions require less effort than straight-line motions involving sudden sharp changes in direction. *Drilling* (*Zuan*, 钻) and spiral motions are the keys to convert forces between the principal directions (between up/down, forward/backward and lateral left/right directions).

5. Maintain internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力) to elongate your tendons, ligaments and muscles, and extend your joints to build up your whole-body “spring-like force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力). The important pairs are:

- a. The vertical pair that elongates your spine (visualize imaginary springs connecting your feet to your head),
- b. The horizontal pair between your front knee and rear hip that extend your legs (visualize holding an imaginary balloon between your knees), and
- c. The pair that hyper-extend your shoulders and arms (visualize imaginary springs connecting your wrists to your neck).

Advanced students should visualize/maintain internal opposing-force-pairs with every element of their body. Visualize imaginary springs connecting your wrists, between your wrists and your neck, etc.

6. Let your body feel/experience the resistance/interaction of the surroundings (*Yu Zhou Zheng Li*, 宇宙争力). Keep your *path-of-force-propagation* pure, feel the ground, take up power from the ground. Make your head, waist, and spine lead, drive, and initiate every movement (using the ground).

诀曰：舒展，连通，一贯。

Keep your posture (*frame*) integrity; feel your optimal body *alignment* and proper *connected-ness*. All movements are slow with relaxed isometric of muscles (no tensing); you “feel” a drag as if moving through molasses, perceiving both the dominant natural contracting prime mover muscles and the antagonist muscles while keeping them relaxed. Visualize putting a heavy weight down gently (顺力逆行). You must be able to reverse your movement and/or change direction instantaneously at will.

7. Use harmonized whole-body movement.

诀曰：一动无不动。

When you move one element, let it move only as part of your whole-body, coordinate your entire body to move every element in unison (whole-body neuromuscular coordination). Maintain your center of gravity to move within the middle 1/3 of your step. Move your hands/forearms in harmony (*Quan Zhen Xiang He*, 全身相合) within your *comfort zone*: not higher than your eyebrow; not lower than your navel; do not cross over the central line; do not go laterally beyond your shoulders; do not reach beyond your front toes; do not touch your torso.



8. You may stand higher than in relaxed-standing practice (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩). Your legs need only be “not straight and not locked”, just slightly bent (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直).
9. Add free-step (*Huo Bu*, 活步; wading or gliding steps) exercises only after you have built a foundation in fixed-step (*Ding Bu*, 定步) exercises. Harmonize and interact with your surroundings as you step; emphasize *simultaneity*: your hands, feet, and head must “arrive simultaneously” (*Shou Jiao Qi Dao*, 手脚齐到).

诀曰:初练时以形带意,姿式不可不讲究,久练后,以意取形,意念到则姿式自然合理。

Though beginners should pay attention to the principle requirements of the external physical forms, we emphasize again the following: Do not merely imitate physical patterns of movement (modeling in NLP), look inwards, grasp the *Yi* (意), focus intense mental concentration (imaging in NLP) on integrating your mind-body through self-exploration (trial) and neuromuscular perceptive movement (feel); it is important to understand the reasoning behind each maneuver/technique. Focus your mind-intent to lead and guide all your movement with free expression (no fixed pattern) to ingrain the path-of-force-propagation. There is no such thing as doing it right or wrong when there is total freedom and harmony. Eliminate all unnecessary physical motions and negative mental distractions; consciously practice neuromuscular perceptive movements with your relaxed whole-body.

诀曰:但只有姿式而无意念,如只得皮毛而失其神髓。

Mere repetition of rhythmic physical movements without mental visualization robs the movement of its *essence*, *purpose*, and *aliveness* (*Shi Qi Shen Sui*, 失其神髓).

诀曰:试力动作必须和意念配合。

Yiquan uses mental visualization to direct whole-body coordinated movement. When you do a move, mentally define the goal and purpose. Then do it wholeheartedly with your entire, coordinated, relaxed mind-body unity, to move one element, move all elements of your body and mind. Focus your mind to direct a whole-body effort in accomplishing whatever movement you attempt while avoiding any and all extraneous or unnecessary movement and negative mental distractions, listen to your body, read your muscles, kinesthetically experience and synthesize the concurrent sequential overlapping action of each element of the action into a “harmony of actions”. Thus, in slow-motion trial-and-feel, the short list of important points is:

1. As you move, let your body experience its internal changes (*Ti Ren*, 体认): feel the balance and weight shift, the relaxation/tension exchange of your muscles (kinesthetic perception), the links and forces transmitting sequence through your

body (*Lian Tong*, 连通), the concurrent sequential overlapping coordination needed to integrate your body into the harmonized whole-body state.

2. Feel your mental state change: Make your mental visualization realistic.
3. Feel the interaction of your entire body with the surroundings (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力); visualize harmonizing and interacting with the unlimited forces of the surrounding universe.

When you do slow-motion trial-and-feel exercises, conjoint with feeling/meeting resistance, you must maintain the sense of equilibrium throughout the motion. As you move, change your physical form without losing the feeling that you can meet resistance in any direction at any point in time and at any position with a whole-body effort, i.e., maintain your whole-body state of equilibrium, proper *connected-ness* and optimal *alignment* with your changing posture.

诀曰：意在整体与内部，不要使局部破坏整体的统一。

Oral Tradition: Look inwards, focus your concentration and mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) internally and on your whole-body synthesis; do not let localized irregularities destroy your integrated whole-body harmony.

In the beginning, you may consider this exercise as a sequence of relaxed-standing postures, each slightly different from the previous one. Slowly change from one posture to the next. If you lose the feeling of resistance (the heaviness or drag of the surrounding air on your body) and concomitant equilibrium and potential for releasing power in your direction of choice, stop and do relaxed-standing in that posture until you get the feeling again. Then slowly change to the next posture. Thus, the neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange cycle is as follows:

| Action of the Maneuver      | Neuromuscular Condition |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Start Posture - stillness   | Relaxation (松)          |
| Slow, smooth, even movement | Tension (紧)             |
| Stop Posture - stillness    | Relaxation (松)          |
| Slow, smooth, even movement | Tension (紧)             |
| Stop Posture - stillness    | Relaxation (松)          |
| .....                       | .....                   |

Do this “go-stop-go posture change” with your harmonized whole-body only in the beginning stage; smooth non-stop motion is the goal. When you have mastered the “go-stop-go” technique above, you must let the movement flow with no conscious effort, i.e., change postures slowly, fluidly, and smoothly while maintaining the feeling of your whole-body harmony (*Dong Zuo Xie Tiao*, 动作谐调). Here it helps to visualize moving very slowly and evenly in viscous molasses. Connect large motions with small circles at the turning points.

诀曰:静中生 动,动中求 静。

Oral Tradition: From stillness, beget movement; in movement, seek and retain stillness.

诀曰:动即是 静,静即是 动,动静静 动互根用。

Oral Tradition: Stillness and movement are coexisting transitional phases of an action. One phase begets the other.

诀曰:先由不动中去体会,再由微动中去认识。欲动又欲止,欲止又欲动。有动中不得 不止,止中不得 不动之意。

Oral Tradition: First, use stillness practice to sense, perceive, explore, and experience, then use motionless-movement practice to learn, know, cultivate, and master the proper connected-ness, alignment, and neuromuscular coordination necessary to achieve whole-body harmony.

When you have mastered slow-motion trial-and-feel exercises in fixed-step (*Ding Bu Shi Li*, 定步试力), incorporate them with free-step (*Huo Bu*, 活步, see Chapter 4: Footwork). You must eventually be able to feel and meet resistance, and maintain the synthesized spring-like whole-body harmony unity while doing free-step (*Huo Bu*, 活步). You must be able to perform every maneuver/technique in motion and to rapidly agilely switch between them fluidly; mind and body must work in synch; movements must flow with no conscious effort. Remember, large number of physical and “mentally visualized resistance” (*Ti Yan Zu Li*, 体验阻力) repetitions are the keys. Repetition is the mother of all skills.

诀曰:两足重量三七互换,脚无定位,身无定势。

Oral Tradition: Be form-less and method-less. There are no fixed feet positions and no fixed body postures. Always maintain your balance within the middle third of your step, distributing your weight 30/70 or 70/30 between your legs.

诀曰:有形练到无形处,练到无形是真功。

Oral Tradition: Initially, practice and develop your maneuver/technique with proper external form; then change, adapt, and refine it until it becomes form-less. A maneuver/technique is most effective when it is form-less.

Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses then devise a goal oriented training schedule (*You Fa Er Lian*, 有法而练); train with a purpose. Use the above as your guideline and practice as you feel inclined.

In the next section, we will explore examples of basic skills *Shi Li* training and conditioning (methods and procedures) using several quintessential maneuvers/techniques.

## Essential Skills

The following three classes of trial-and-feel exercises (*Shi Li*, 试力) will cover the essentials of basic skills *Shi Li* (试力) training. These exercises for synthesizing/conditioning of your neuromuscular whole-body coordination are not “special” or “unique”; there are no “secret moves”; you can invent other *Shi Li* (试力) maneuvers, as you feel inclined. The primary goals are to achieve whole-body harmony of actions (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调) and to cultivate paths-of-force-propagation (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路) through kinesthetic perception of the concurrent sequential overlapping movement of your body elements.

### A. Basic Trial-and-feel Exercises (*Ji Ben Shi Li*, 基本试力)

#### 1. Level Forward-Push/Backward-Pull (*Ping Tui Shi Li*, 平推试力)

From the small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩), rotate your forearms to palms facing down as if resting them on the surface of shoulder deep water; point your fingers to the front; keep your hands at shoulder level, slightly higher than your elbows. Use relaxed, slow, even, and smooth movement; do not use any brute strength but guide your actions with mind-intent (*Yong Yi Bu Yong Li*, 用意不用力). Explore (*trial*) and experience (*feel*); look inwards, listen to your body, and read your muscles.

- a. Visualize springs connecting each finger to the wall in front (external, *Shen Wai Zheng Li*, 身外争力). Slowly, pushing with “*drilling*” of your rear leg, turning your rear knee slightly inward/forward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋; *Ji*, 挤) while mildly opposing with the front leg using relaxed isometric, keeping your front knee stationary with slight inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), move your whole-body forward; lead a little with your forehead, stretching the imaginary spring connecting your head to your rear foot and compressing the imaginary spring between your front knee and your rear hip (internal, *Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力). Simultaneously, push your arms forward, inward, and downward, with slight inward twisting intention (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), for about a foot to the front; do not extend your palms beyond your lead foot toes, do not submerge the back of your hands below the imaginary water surface, compressing the imaginary springs to the front wall with your fingers, compressing the imaginary spring between your wrists and between your knees, stretching the imaginary springs between your

wrists and neck; do not straighten your arms and legs, i.e., do not lock your elbows and knees (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直). Next push your entire body backwards with your front leg (keeping the front knee stationary and slightly bend) with slight outward twisting (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) while mildly opposing with the rear leg, stretching the imaginary spring between your head and your front foot and the imaginary spring between your front knee and rear hip, turning your rear knee slightly outward/backward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋); move your whole-body backwards but do not lean backwards. Simultaneously, pull your arms backward, outward, and upward with slight outward twisting intention (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), do not lift your palms above the surface of the water, stretching the imaginary springs from your fingers to the front wall; do not let your forearms contact your torso. During this forward/backward movement, keep your center of gravity within the middle third of your step. Flex all your joints. Specifically, when pushing forward, press the rear hip joint forward (*Tu*, 吐) and when pulling backward, pull it backward (*Tun*, 吞); do not lock your hip. Though the dominant force is forward/backward, forces in all six directions are always present and balanced.

- b. Visualize standing chest deep in a sticky, viscous fluid (molasses). Push forward and pull backward to feel the heavy drag with your entire body, “kinesthetically meeting resistance” (*Ti Cha Zu Li*, 体察阻力) with whole-body harmony effort.
- c. Combine the above level push/pull with wading step. When stepping forward: pull your hands back as you simultaneously bring up your rear foot (as if using the drag of the surrounding air to pull your body forward and upward, 假借无穷宇宙力); step forward by pushing your foot forward and then outward. Plant the ball of your foot first then the whole foot; simultaneously, as you “drill” your front leg (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), push your hands and head forward. When stepping backward: pull hands back as you withdraw your front foot; push your foot backward and outward to step back. Plant your foot first then push your hands forward. Visualize moving in a room of viscous molasses. Keep your eyes focused on, and your hands pointing at, a spot straight ahead while stepping in a zigzag pattern (*Bu Xie Shen Zheng*, 步斜身正). Do not look down.

The dominant force to explore (*trial*), experience (*feel*), and “try to figure out” (*Chuai Mo Yi Zhong Li*, 揣摩意中力) in this exercise is the forward/backward force.

## 2. Downward-Press/Upward-Lift (*Fu Chen Shi Li*, 浮沉试力)

From your small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩), visualize standing in chest-deep water with your hands resting on a floating log. Slowly and evenly raise your hands to eyebrow level; simultaneously bend your knees and squat a little, compressing the imaginary spring from your butt to the ground, ducking your head under the imaginary surface of the water. Then, pushing your hands downward through the water, lead with your head and raise yourself above the imaginary water surface, stretch the imaginary spring from your butt to the ground, stretch

the imaginary spring from your feet to your head. Let your body experience the water resistance and the coordination of the vertical internal isometric-opposing-force-pair in your spine (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力).

The dominant force to explore and experience here is the whole-body up/down (*Shen Fa Fu Chen*, 身法浮沉) force.

### 3. Open/Close (*Kai He Shi Li*, 开合试力)

- a. Assume the basic parallel-step posture with hands in front of your thighs. Press your palms towards each other (close, *He*, 合); imagine that you are compressing an imaginary spring; simultaneously slightly shift your weight forward towards the ball of both feet compressing the imaginary spring between your knees with inward twisting intent (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋). Then, pull your arms apart laterally sideways (open, *Kai*, 开), imagine stretching springs between your hands and simultaneously shift your weight back towards your heels (do not put too much weight on your heels; do not lean backwards) stretching the imaginary spring between your knees with outward twisting intent (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋). Then repeat: again press arms closed while shifting your weight forward towards the ball of both feet, etc. Feel the air resistance with your entire body. Your movement should be slow and even; do not use any brute strength.
- b. From the small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩); visualize imaginary springs connecting your wrists to the back of your neck; springs connecting your wrists to each other. Bring your hands to shoulder level, palms facing each other as if holding a ball. Push off your front foot with outward twisting intent, shifting your weight and hips back and down slightly (*Tun*, 吞) while mildly opposing with the rear leg with outward twisting intent (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋); slowly compress the imaginary springs between your wrists by closing your arms while rotating your forearms to palms facing your face (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋); stretching the imaginary springs between your front knee and rear hip, and between your front foot and your head. Then pushing off the ground with your rear leg with inward twisting intent while mildly opposing with the front leg; shift your weight and hips slightly forward (*Tu*, 吐); twisting legs inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) compress the imaginary spring between your knees, stretching the imaginary spring between your rear foot and head; slowly spread your arms open to your sides, rotating your forearms to palms facing down (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋); stretch the imaginary spring between your wrists (*Da Kai*, 打开). Feel the opposing tension forces between your hands as you slowly open and close your arms. Use mind-intent; do not use brute strength. Maintain a mild elongation on your spine; relax all your shoulder, elbow, and wrist joints (*Guan Jie Fang Song*, 关节放松). This exercise is the foundation for lateral strikes (*Ce Pi*, 侧劈).

The dominant force to explore, cultivate, and experience in this exercise is the laterally open and close (*Kai He*, 开合) force.

#### 4. Paddle Water (*Bo Shui Shi Li*, 拨水试力)

Assume the small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩) with arms extended to your sides, palms facing downward at navel level. Visualize standing in waist deep water. Pushing with your rear leg while mildly opposing with your front leg, slightly twisting knees inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), shift your weight and hips forward (*Ji*, 挤; *Tu*, 吐); simultaneously *paddle* your arms forward, inward, and upward, twisting your forearms outwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), ending with your palms facing your face. Lead slightly with your forehead and visualize compressing the imaginary spring between your knees while stretching the imaginary spring between your rear foot and your head. *Feel* (experience) the water resistance with your palms and your whole-body. Then pushing with your front leg while mildly opposing with your rear leg, slightly twisting knees outwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), shift your weight and hips backward and downward (*Zuo*, 坐; *Tun*, 吞); simultaneously *paddle* your arms downward, outward, and backward, twisting your forearms inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) ending with palms facing downwards. “Sit down” on your rear leg and visualize stretching the imaginary spring between your knees while stretching the imaginary spring between your front foot and your head. Feel the water resistance with the back of your hands and your whole-body. Do this slowly and evenly with mind-intent; do not use any brute strength (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力). Keep your joints (especially your wrist joints) relaxed. This exercise is the foundation for palm heel strikes (*Zhang Fa*, 掌法).

When you can “*feel*” the thickness/drag around you, do this *Bo Shui Shi Li* (拨水试力) with the wading step. When stepping forward: Withdraw arms to your sides while bringing your rear foot forward to your supporting leg; continue the step forward; plant your foot then paddle your arms forward, inward, and upward. When stepping backward: Withdraw your front foot towards your supporting leg and arms to your sides simultaneously; continue to step back, plant your foot then paddle your arms forward, inward, and upward. Visualize moving in a room full of molasses. Keep your focus on a target straight ahead while stepping in a zigzag pattern. Do not look down; flex and relax all your joints.

The dominant force to explore (*trial*), experience (*feel*), and “try to figure out” (*Chuai Mo Yi Zhong Li*, 揣摩意中力) in this exercise is the upward/downward force while forces in all six directions are always present and balanced (*Liu Mian Li*, 六面力).

## B. Push-Hands Trial-and-feel Exercises (*Tui Shou Shi Li*, 推手试力)

### 1. Downward-Press/Upward-Lift (*Fu An Shi Li*, 扶按试力)

Assume the *Hold/Press* small-step posture (*Fu An Zhuang*, 扶按桩). Visualize you are standing in waist deep water with your palms facing down, with your forearms and hands resting on a large floating wooden ball, with your elbows lower than your hands. Pushing off with the front leg while mildly opposing with the rear leg, “drilling” your legs slightly outward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), turning your heels inwards (invisible), stretching the imaginary spring connecting your knees, slowly using your whole-body effort (*Shen Ti Dai Dong*, 身体带动) shift your hips and weight backwards (*Tun*, 吞) and press your arms (palm heels convex) downward, backward, and outward with inward twisting intent (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), spreading your hands apart slightly, keep your hands higher than your elbows and above your navel. Feel the resistance of the floating ball. Stretch the imaginary springs: between your front foot and your head; between your front knee and your rear hip (visualize opening your knees). Visualize compressing the imaginary spring from your butt to the ground, slightly sinking your whole-body downwards (*Chen*, 沉). Then, grasp the wooden ball (fingers pointing down), pushing off the ground with your rear leg while mildly opposing with the front leg, “drilling” legs inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), turning heels outwards (invisible), squeezing the imaginary balloon between your knees, slowly using your whole-body effort shift your hips and weight forwards (*Tu*, 吐) and lift the wooden ball out of the water (*Fu*, 浮) and push it upward, forward, and inward; your hands squeeze together slightly and do not move your hands higher than the level of your eyebrow. Feel the weight of the wooden ball. Stretch the imaginary springs between your rear foot and your head and compress the imaginary spring between your front knee and your rear hip (visualize squeezing the imaginary balloon between your knees). Let your entire body feel the weight and drag of the ball; read how your muscles interact; sense the force transmission through the path-of-force-propagation from your feet to your hands.

While the dominant direction of the *Fu An Shi Li* (扶按试力) action is upwards and downwards, you must not neglect the forward/backward and the lateral open/close secondary actions (*Liu Mian Mo Li*, 六面摸力). When you have mastered this in fixed-step (*Ding Bu*, 定步), practice it in free-step (*Huo Bu*, 活步). When stepping, pay attention to the *drilling* (twisting) actions of the legs (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋).

NOTES on *Fu An Shi Li* (扶按试力):

**Fixed step practice:** Keep your front knee stationary, shin “normal” (perpendicular) to the ground. Visualize that your shin (front leg) is braced so that your front knee is “immovable”. However, twisting motion (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋) produced by *drilling* with the leg is allowed. Keep the angle between your front foot and shin larger than 90 degrees. Visualize an imaginary “strong” spring from behind your hips to the ground, allowing only limited backward/forward



movement (*Tun Tu*, 吞吐). Moving your hips too far (backwards and downwards) destroys the *integrity of your frame* (*Xing San*, 形散); do not lean backwards.

**Forward step practice:** Press your hands downwards, backwards, and outwards while shifting your weight forward, *drilling* your front leg slightly outward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), turning your front heel inward, pull your rear leg forward towards your front supporting leg. Visualize pulling yourself forward by interacting with the unlimited surrounding (*Jia Jie Wu Qiong Yu Zhou Li*, 假借无穷宇宙力). Continue to step forward while pushing your hands upward, forward, and inward. When planting your foot, *drill* your leg slightly inward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), twisting your heel outward and simultaneously push your hands forward. Your hands, front foot, and head must “*arrive simultaneously*” (*Shou Jiao Qi Dao*, 手脚齐到).

**Backward step practice:** Push off your front foot, shifting your weight backward, *drilling* legs outwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) slightly to turn your heel inward, withdraw your front leg towards your rear supporting leg while pressing your hands downward, backward, and outward. Continue to step back while bringing your hands upward; plant foot then push your hands forward, and inward while *drilling* your legs inward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) to twist heels outward (visualize squeezing the imaginary balloon between your knees).

**Shuffle step:** Push your hands upward, forward, and inward while pushing (shuffling) your front foot forward by pushing off the ground with your rear foot. Hands, front foot, and head must *arrive simultaneously*. Pull your rear leg forward while pressing your hands downward, backward, and outward.

**Half step backward** (Lead leg replacement): Simultaneously pull your hands and front leg back. Simultaneously push hands forward and step forward with the same leg.

**Half step forward** (Cushion step): Press your hands down and back while bringing your rear leg half step forward. Push off with your rear leg, drive your front foot forward half a step while pushing your hands forward.

**Side step:** Side step with your front foot while pressing hands down. Push forward while stepping rear foot forward.

## 2. Hook/Hang (*Gou Gua Shi Li*, 勾挂试力)

Assume the *Hook/Hang* small-step posture (*Gou Gua Zhuang*, 勾挂桩). Twist your forearms inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) so your palms are facing down. Slowly and evenly (*Yun Jing Ru Chou Si*, 运劲如抽丝), shifting your hips and weight forward (*Tu*, 吐), slightly squeezing the imaginary balloon between your knees, *drilling* legs inward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), turning heels slightly outward, stretching the imaginary spring connecting your head to your rear foot

(*Zheng Li*, 争力), push your hands forward, inward, and downward into an imaginary heap of sticky dough to a level just below your shoulder (*Qi Shou Ru Gang Cuo*, 起手如刚锉). Keep the front knee stationary as if braced in all directions. Then, pushing off with your front foot, shifting your hips and weight backward (*Tun*, 吞), slightly opening your knees, *drilling* legs outward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), turning heels slightly inward, stretching the imaginary spring from your front foot to the back of your head, slowly pull your hands backward, upward, and outward, turning forearms so both palms are facing up (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋); do *hook/hang* (*Gou Gua*, 勾挂) with both hands to your mouth level (*Hui Shou Si Gou Gan*, 回手似钩杆). Visualize springs connecting your hands to the back of your neck and springs connecting your wrists; feel the resistance as you “pull open” your arms. Then slowly squeeze your arms together like compressing springs between them, turn your forearms to palms down (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), and push forward; feel the resistance and interaction with the imaginary surrounding viscous fluid (sticky dough). The dominant force for hook/hang *Shi Li* (*Gou Gua Shi Li*, 勾挂试力) is forward/backward but forces in all six directions are present (*Liu Mian Mo Li*, 六面摸力).

When you have mastered this in fixed-step, combine wading step with hook/hang trial-and-feel, perform free-step training. When stepping forward, visualize pulling yourself forward with the interacting unlimited frictional force of the surrounding (假借无穷宇宙力). When stepping backward, make use of body oscillation (*Gu Dang*, 鼓荡) from the backward/forward movement and muscular contraction to generate spring-like force (*Tan Li*, 弹力). Practice generating this spring-like force (*Tan Li*, 弹力) by rapidly switching from backward *Gou Gua* (勾挂) to forward push with a partner in “reflex action” exercise (*Fan Ying*, 反应).

### 3. Press/Hang (*Fen Gua Shi Li*, 分挂试力)

Assume the *Hook/Hang* small-step posture (*Gou Gua Zhuang*, 勾挂桩). Slowly and evenly push your hands (palms facing down) into a heap of imaginary sticky dough, feeling the resistance with your whole-body (*Ti Cha Zu Li*, 体察阻力); use your whole-body to drive your action by shifting your hips and weight forward (*Shen Cui Dong Shou*, 身催动手). Then shifting your hips and weight backward, slowly pull your hands back and separate them: the lead (front) hand turns palm up (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), doing the hook/hang maneuver to your mouth level and the rear hand pulls back on the central line plane (*Shou Zhong Xian*, 守中线), turns palm down (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) and then laterally press outwards and downwards. Visualize imaginary springs connecting your hands to the back of your neck and springs connecting the hands to each other; feel the resistance as you “pull open” your arms (*Kai*, 开). Then slowly squeeze your arms together like compressing the imaginary springs between them (*He*, 合), turning your lead hand to palm down (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) and push it forward, downward, and inward on the central line plane (*Shou Zhong Xian*, 守中线). Simultaneously, coordinate and push your rear hand inward, forward, and downward. Feel the resistance of the imaginary sticky dough. Visualize your front knee being braced so that it is

“immovable”. The dominant force is lateral open/close (*Kai He*, 开合). When you have mastered the fixed-step exercise, synthesize this *press/hang* exercise with the wading step. Use reflex action exercise (*Fan Ying*, 反应) to cultivate your spring-like spontaneous reflexes (*Tan Li*, 弹力).

## C. Core/torso (Body Method) Trial-and-feel Exercises (*Shen Fa Shi Li*, 身法试力)

### 1. Spinning/Turning (*Xuan Fa Shi Li*, 旋法试力)

Assume the palms down left-lead small-step posture. Visualize you are standing in waist deep water; your hands and forearms pressing down on an imaginary large floating ball, hands at shoulder level, elbows lower than your wrists.

Pushing with your left lead foot, stretching the imaginary spring between your knees, shift your hips backward, upward and slightly to your right (*Tun*, 吞; *Fu*, 浮), stretching the imaginary spring from your rear hip to the ground, pull the imaginary ball outwards to your left and backwards towards your body while lifting it upwards, rotating your wrists in synch to fingers pointing to your right. Simultaneously as you shift your hips to your right visualize stretching the imaginary spring between your left foot and your head and turning the imaginary floating ball with both hands to the left. Do not let your right hand cross over to the left of your central line, keep your elbows prop out with your hands higher than your elbows. Then, shifting your hips left stretching the imaginary spring between your right foot and your head; turn/spin the imaginary floating ball to the right, rotating your wrists in synch to fingers pointing left. Do not let your left hand cross over to the right of your central line, keep hands higher than elbows. Continue by shifting your hips forward, pushing the imaginary ball forward away from your body while pressing down slightly (*Tu*, 吐; *Chen*, 沉), do not push your palm heel beyond your front toe. Repeat this spinning/turning slowly and evenly, spinning/turning the ball counter-clockwise around a vertical axis. Prop your elbows outwards; your hands must not cross over your central line: left hand stays to the left of your central line and right hand stays to the right. Rotate your wrists in synch. Practice doing both clockwise and counter-clockwise spinning/turning. In this spinning/turning (*Xuan Fa Shi Li*, 旋法试力) exercise, the dominant force is forward/backward and the hands are at or below shoulder level.

NOTES: When you move the ball to your left, your body shifts to your right and vice versa to remove your body from the line of attack. Your center of gravity moves in an oval (elliptical) path with the short axis along the lateral left/right direction; the movement in the forward/backward directions is bigger than those in the lateral left/right directions. Though in this maneuver, the dominant forward/backward force is used to induce the secondary lateral

left/right force (*Zong Bo Dang Chu Heng Bo*, 纵波荡出横波); the whole-body balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) requires that forces in all six directions be present and balanced.

When you have mastered this in fixed step (*Ding Bu*, 定步), incorporate the wading step (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步) with your spinning/turning *Shi Li* maneuver.

## 2. Swaying/Waving (*Yao Fa Shi Li*, 摇法试力)

From the left-lead small-step posture, bring hands up to face/mouth level, keep shoulders down and elbows prop out at shoulder level. Rotate your forearms to palms facing forward. Visualize your hands intercepting an imaginary large ball rolling toward you. As this ball approaches, receive it by sinking your whole-body onto your rear leg, backwards and to your right, compressing the imaginary spring from your rear hip to the ground, conducting its force to the ground (stretching the imaginary springs between your front foot and your head, and between your front knee and rear hip); do not lean body backwards. Direct the imaginary ball to your left with both hands while shifting your body to your right to avoid its force (Tactic: move away from the line of force). Do not let your right hand cross over your central line to the left. After neutralizing the ball's motion/momentum, next shift your body to your left while directing the imaginary ball to your right with both hands; do not let your left hand cross over your central line to the right. Then push the imaginary ball forward. Repeat this circular motion in a clockwise as well as counter-clockwise direction. Feel with the entire body; let your mind-body experience a coordinated, whole-body effort. Prop your elbows outwards; your hands must not cross over your central line: left hand stays to the left of your central line and right hand stays to the right. Your center of gravity moves in an oval (elliptical) path with the short axis along the forward/backward direction. In this waving (*Yao Fa Shi Li*, 摇法试力) maneuver, the lateral left/right force is dominant and the hands remain approximately at face/mouth level, with elbows lower than your shoulder.

Though in this maneuver, the dominant lateral left/right force is used to induce the secondary forward/backward force (*Heng Bo Dang Chu Zong Bo*, 横波荡出纵波) the “essence” of the whole-body balanced force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) requires that forces in all six direction be present and balanced.

When you have mastered this in fixed step, incorporate the wading step with your waving *Shi Li* maneuver.

## 3. The Bobbing Turtle (*Shen Gui Chu Shui Shi Li*, 神龟出水试力)

From the left-lead small-step posture, raise your hands to eyebrow level and rotate your forearms to palms facing downwards. Visualize your hands are resting on an imaginary large floating balloon. Pushing off your front foot, shift your weight back and to your right stretching the

imaginary spring between your left foot and head and between your knees; sink down as if ducking your head under water, compressing the imaginary spring from your rear hip to the ground, while simultaneously lifting the balloon leftward and upward with your arms. Your head moves back and right towards your right elbow and shoulder; do not let your right hand cross over your central line to your left. Then, move your hands to your right while pressing your hands downward, (press downward slightly to mouth level) while shifting your weight left and forward and upward like a turtle sticking its head above the water surface, stretching the imaginary spring between your right foot and head. Your head moves left and forward towards your left elbow and shoulder. Do not let your left hand cross over your central line to your right. Your head moves in a circular motion between your arms. Your up/down, left/right, front/back weight shift and arms movement are in coordinated opposing directions – weight sink down arms moves up, weight shifts left arms moves right and vice versa. In this *bobbing turtle* (*Shen Gui Chu Shui Shi Li*, 神龟出水试力) maneuver, the upward/downward forces are dominant and the hands move between the eyebrow and the shoulder levels.

While the up/down and front/back weight shift provides the dominant power, the circular motion induces lateral left/right and forward/backward forces as well (*Zhong Li Bo Dang Chu Zong Heng Bo*, 重力波荡出纵横波). Feel with the entire body; let your mind-body experience a coordinated, whole-body effort.

When you have mastered the fixed step (*Ding Bu*, 定步) practice, combine the wading step (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步) with this *bobbing turtle* exercise. Evasive techniques in combat, slipping, bob and weave, and ducking, etc., are imbedded in this. This exercise is the basis for *Hui Lang Wu* (挥浪舞), one of the four forms (*Si Xing*, 四形) of *Jian Wu* (健舞).

## D. Fighting Skill Trial-and-Feel Training (*San Shou Shi Li*, 散手试力)

Training for all practical fighting maneuvers/techniques (see Chapter 8: Fighting) must start with slow-motion trial-and-feel exercise. From your small-step on-guard posture (*Niao Nan Fei Zhuang*, 鸟难飞桩), execute the selected maneuver/technique slowly and evenly without using any brute strength (用意不用力).

诀曰：顺乎自然，合乎需要。

The maneuvers must be natural, instinctive, and conform to necessities. With full focus attention/concentration (mind-intent, *Yi*, 意), let your body “*feel the resistance*” and experience the concurrent sequential overlapping coordination of the whole-body harmony necessary to deliver the balanced-force (*Ti Ren*, 体认). Keep optimal *alignment*, proper *connected-ness*, and

the *ground path pure*; take up power from the ground (连通一贯). Let your neuromuscular system perceive the internal/external isometric-opposing-force-pairs and the path-of-force-propagation (寻找劲路). Relaxed, slow, repetitive practice, guided by visualization, will program your mind-body to establish the correct patterns, eventually eliminating the need for conscious thought or effort in the movement (*Yi Wu Yi*, 意无意). A practical maneuver/technique must become a natural *un*-conscious instinctive instantaneous automatic response, become habit, becomes spontaneous reflex, before it is useful.

诀曰：打法定要先上身，手脚齐到法为真。

Oral Tradition: Every maneuver/technique must become second nature, become habit, become spontaneous reflex before it becomes useful; hands and feet must “arrive simultaneously” to be truly effective.

When a maneuver/technique has been ingrained by slow-motion trial-and-feel without using any brute strength, you must practice it fast with soft (relaxed) and hard (tensed) focus augmented by breath control (grunting). How fast is fast enough? If you feel you are not using the ground, losing your optimal body *alignment* and proper *connected-ness*, you are doing it too fast. Slow down and re-gain your feel. (See Chapter 6: Power regarding soft and hard focusing at the moment of power release.) Speed, coordination, and the proper execution of the practical maneuver/technique will result after you have eliminated all unnecessary physical motions and negative mental distractions. To understand a maneuver/technique, you must take it to the extremes and examine its opposites. (The proper training sequence for practical techniques and fighting will be covered in Chapter 8: Fighting.) We shall briefly describe two examples below to complete this chapter:

## 1. Upward Punch (*Zuan Quan Shi Li*, 钻拳试力)

Begin practice with relaxed, natural, comfortable and easy coordinated whole-body movement. Visualize subtle resistance on all your moves (visualize moving in a room of molasses) to develop neuromuscular coordination. Then gradually develop *sudden-ness* and *explosive-ness* of your power discharge/release with each move. Use whole-body relaxed movement and extend the joints at the ankles, knees, hips, shoulders, elbows and wrists in concurrent sequential overlapping motion to keep the path-of-force-propagation clean and pure.

Stand erect in the parallel-step posture with knees slightly bend (not straight); feet shoulder width apart; arms in on-guard position, palms facing down. Push off your right leg (turning your right knee slightly inward – “*drill*”) while pushing with the ball of your left foot (left knee turning slightly outward), pivot to twist your torso 45 degrees to your left. Simultaneously, visualize stretching the imaginary spring between your right foot and your head, uncoil your back and open all your joints (ankle, knee, hip, shoulder, elbow) to shoot your right fist upwards along your central line, twisting your right forearm to palm facing your face while *drilling* it upward, forward, and inward. Simultaneously, pull your left hand upward, outward, and

backward to guard your throat (palm facing out). Visualize stretching the imaginary springs between your wrists. Keep your eyes on your right little finger. Push off your left leg to rotate your torso 45 degrees to your right; sink and relax your whole-body, slightly coil your back while returning your hands along their respective paths to their starting on-guard positions.

Push off your left leg, turning your left knee slightly inward while pushing with the ball of your right foot (right knee turn slightly outward) to pivot your torso 45 degrees to your right. Simultaneously, twist your left forearm to palm facing your face while *drilling* it upward, forward, and inward along your central line. Pull your right hand outward, upward, and backward to guard your throat; palm facing out. Then return to on-guard. Perform this exercise with alternate hand “*drilling*” (*Zuan*, 钻) the upward punch.

NOTES: Power comes from the coordination of the entire body: the legs, the back, the arms, and the body pivot all moving in unison (一动无不动, 一动全身转). Most of your striking power originates from pushing off with your feet and links into the chain of power of your legs, hips, waist, lower and upper back, chest, and arms (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯). Twist (*drill*) your forearm/wrist at impact and tense only momentarily to focus your balanced-force when practicing hard focus power release/discharge.

诀曰: 起是钻, 落是翻, 腰似车轮腿似钻。

Oral Tradition: Rise is drill; down is overturn. Waist pivots like a wheel; legs twist like drills. Every move involves twisting and pivoting your whole-body in harmony.

诀曰: 多面螺旋。

Oral Tradition: Use multi-dimensional twists, drills, and pivots in harmony.

## 2. Vertical Downward Chop (*Pi Fa Shi Li*, 劈法试力)

See Chapter 8: Fighting for a full description of the proper movement of *Pi Fa* (劈法). Be sure to use the “*shortened lever principal*” to increase the acceleration of your chop (i.e., reduce the radius of curvature as you swing into the target zone). Note the difference between the chop (*Pi Fa*, 劈法) and palm heel strike (*Zhang Fa*, 掌法).

## Training Guideline - Summary

诀曰: 锻炼时要永远保持意力不断的虚灵挺拔, 轻松均整, 以达到舒适得力为原则。

Oral Tradition: In your training and conditioning, always maintain your mind-intent, attention, and focus concentration to mildly push your head upward and your feet downward, slightly elongating your spine; balance relaxation and tension appropriately to achieve whole-body harmony and comfortable natural ease of movement.

诀曰: 动静处中, 顺乎自然, 合乎需要, 应机而发, 因势而变, 能守能用。

Oral Tradition: Move appropriately with comfortable natural ease; you must be able to seize engagement opportunities, change and adapt according to your opponent; the ultimate test is: all maneuvers/techniques must be useful and effective in combat.

Training a maneuver/technique that is against your instinctive natural abilities is futile because that training would fail under stress. So be effective by being selective; use the principle of “*simplicity of choice*”; it is important to understand the reasoning for your choice. Continual practice is required to maintain your skills; choose maneuvers/techniques that you will practice regularly. To understand a maneuver/technique, you must take it to the extremes and explore its opposites. However, do not be overly conscious of meeting all the specifics of the requirements of the *body mechanics*; grasp the *Yi* (意) by focusing your concentration on the appropriate visualization and the appropriate external form will follow.

诀曰: 力量在身外去求取, 意念在无心中操持。

Oral Tradition: Attempt to control and maintain your mind-intent *un*-consciously, with no conscious thought, mind-intent and/or effort.

When practicing focused (hard) power releases, interspersed the hard focus with soft relaxed movement so that your motion would not become rigid and/or stiff (See Chapter 6: Power). Practice with mind-intent and purpose (有意而练) and devise training regiment to achieve that goal. As long as harmonized whole-body movement, neuromuscular coordination, and kinesthetic perception is maintained, the movement for trial-and-feel exercises may be large or small, and/or slow or fast, to provide the desired training for the practitioner.

诀曰: 心领神会, 体认操存。

Oral Tradition: Understand the principles involved and put them into practice; perceive, explore, experiment, and experience the neuromuscular coordination to in-grain the maneuver to become habit with the mind and body working in synch and with the movement flowing with no conscious effort.

However, you must also focus your concentration on mental guided imagery (*Yi*, 意):

1. To guide your neuromuscular coordination and kinesthetic perception, and



2. To build *un*-conscious decision-making references for spontaneous (automatic) reflexes through mind-fighting with imagined opponents (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌).

Your aim is the following:

1. Level 1:

诀曰:以形带意,以意领力。求舒展连通,整体谐调。

Perform with proper external *form* to induce appropriate mental imagery. Use *Yi* (意) to lead/guide/direct your force to re-pattern your neuromuscular system to use proper body mechanics (optimal *alignment* and *connected-ness*, etc.) to achieve whole-body harmony.

2. Level 2:

诀曰:以意取形,意到力到。求全身力一,力量谐调。

Synthesize your mind-body to achieve simultaneity, with *Yi* (意) and force arriving simultaneously. Merge all force components as one harmonized force.

3. Level 3:

诀曰:意力不分。有形练到无形处,练到无形是真功。

*Yi* (意) and force become inseparable and indistinguishable; merged as one. Form becomes form-less.

The goal is to develop your innate abilities, to be able to adapt and change according to your opponent.

诀曰:待到自动化阶段才能够谈到应用。

Oral Tradition: Skills must become spontaneous reflexes to be useful.

诀曰:非至於自动运动之境,不能得力得气得神而入化境。

Oral Tradition: Before any maneuver/technique is useful, you must have ingrained its actions to become automatic reflexes; you must be able to perform the proper action at the proper time spontaneously with no conscious thought or effort.

诀曰:习之若恒久,不期自然至,变化形无形,周旋意无意。

Oral Tradition: Act spontaneously without your opponent being aware of your action, be versatile and flexible; maneuver *un*-consciously with mind-less mind, do not be afraid to adapt and change your tactics.

诀曰:操拳能作到不用心处方好。

Oral Tradition: Continual physical and mental practice is essential to master a maneuver/technique. The actions are in-grained into your mind-body neuromuscular system with thousands of mental and physical repetitions; then, the skills become spontaneous reflexes and the movements will flow with no conscious thought or effort.

Finally, the effectiveness of training procedures and methods is ultimately judged by outcome. Those training and conditioning methods that do not produce the desired results must be re-examined and refined.

## Chapter 4: Grunting (*Shi Sheng*, 试声)

# 試 聲

“Grunting” is used to supplement and augment your whole-body focus to deliver maximum power. In Yiquan, practicing “*grunting and breath control*” is known as *Shi Sheng* (试声).

It is natural that when you exert strength you involuntarily exhale and utter a grunt. Yiquan builds on this natural body response with reverse breathing breath control exercise to cultivate and augment the development of your spring-like “*explosive*” discharge/release of power/force (*Hu Xi Tan Li*, 呼吸弹力).

In this chapter, we present the basic principles of augmenting your focus with grunting. We will use a relatively stationary posture. However, you must think, explore, experience, experiment, invent, and refine your training techniques; you will want to cultivate and incorporate grunting augmentation technique into all your punches, strikes, and blows to marshal the whole-body into concerted action/effort when you do every free-step *explosive* power discharge/release (*Huo Bu Fa Li*, 活步发力).

诀曰：声力并发。

Oral Tradition: Grunting and focusing of your power discharge must be simultaneous in order to augment your explosive discharge/release of your harmonized whole-body balanced-force.

## Principles

诀曰:调息呼吸,运用呼吸所生之弹力,以尽拳之妙用。

Oral Tradition: Do breath control exercises. Use reverse breathing to stimulate the breathing musculature to generate “spring-like” forces to compensate for the deficiencies of your blows/strikes/punches.

During a power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力), “grunting” (use of sound enunciation) is primarily a mechanism to augment one’s ability to marshal the entire body into concerted action, to compensate for the deficiencies of the delivery while also serving to startle, distract, confuse, and/or intimidate your opponent. Sound vibration/enunciation (*Sheng Yin Gu Dang*, 声音鼓荡) coordinated with the technique of reverse breathing synthesizes the mind-body, stimulating the musculature of the abdomen, chest, waist, and back into immediate concerted action to augment the discharge of force. When grunting is used properly, correctly, and effectively, the enunciation of sound and the sudden clean crisp explosive burst of discharge/release of power are simultaneous.

诀曰:内练一口气。

Oral Tradition: Qi training is internal.

诀曰:养气之理,呼吸听其自然,不加注意为妙。

Oral Tradition: Let your breathing be natural; do not pay conscious attention to your breathing (inhale and/or exhale).

诀曰:用声来鼓荡周身,增强弹力。

Oral Tradition: Use grunting vibration/enunciation to stimulate your whole-body, to augment your focus, to compensate for deficiencies, and increase your “spring-like” explosive release/discharge of power.

诀曰:声力并发。

Oral Tradition: In order to augment the explosive discharge/release of your harmonized whole-body balanced-force, grunting and focusing of your power discharge must be simultaneous.

In addition, the practice of grunting (*Shi Sheng*, 试声) can increase one’s ability to sustain strikes to the abdomen and chest area. In hand-to-hand combat, when you are at your strongest attacking phase, you are also at your weakest defensive phase. During your attack, if your

defensive, evasive maneuvers and tactics should fail, and you sustain a strike to your body, the grunting use of sound vibration and breath control can, in the same manner that is used for releasing power, stimulate your musculature into immediate concerted action to produce a resilient, spring-like resistance (*Hu Xi Tan Li*, 呼吸弹力) to the incoming force. Reflexive body movement, rolling with the incoming punches, must also be incorporated to minimize the effect of your opponents' attacks.

诀曰：声由内运，气贯全身。

Oral Tradition: Internalize your use of grunting; synthesize it with your musculoskeletal *connected-ness* and *alignment* to marshal the entire body into concerted action.

## Methods and Procedures

Two sounds, “Yee” (*Yi*, 咦) and “Yup” (*Yo*, 哟), are utilized with inhalation and exhalation of the breath to marshal the entire body into action to increase the elastic, spring-like force (*Hu Xi Tan Li*, 呼吸弹力) that we employ in releasing power and resisting strikes. To augment your whole-body power discharge/release, you must focus and synthesize your mind-intent (*Yi*, 意), your balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力), and your grunting stimulus of your breathing musculature simultaneously. Practice should proceed with the following three sequential levels:

### Level 1: Producing the two distinct syllables in the mouth

Select a quiet environment; stand in a relaxed posture (e.g., small-step *Ti Cha Zhuang*, 提插桩) and enter a tranquil mental and physical state. Focus your concentration; keep your eyes gazing at a distant object and stay relaxed. Use visualization and mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to guide and perceive your actions. Slightly part your mouth; retract your tongue with your teeth lightly touching. Stay relaxed as if nothing critical is happening.

**Inhalation Stage:** Breathe in as you sound off “Yee” (*Yi*, 咦) for two to three seconds. The tone should be deep and continuous with a vibration reaching over a long distance; unite the sound with force. Hold your stomach in during this inhalation stage; by holding your stomach in you “load” the breathing musculature. Visualize “lifting” your breath up (*Ti*, 提) to your chest and throat area. It helps to visualize pulling your forearms upwards at the elbow, though, the movement should be invisible.

**Exhalation Stage:** Exhale rapidly while pushing your stomach out; suddenly switch to sounding off a short “Yup” (*Yo*, 哟), momentarily focusing/tensing the musculature of your back, chest, and abdomen while visualizing “*sinking*” the breath (*Chen*, 沉) from your chest to your lower abdomen. Simultaneously visualize stabbing your fingers downward into the ground, allow your stomach to bulge outwards and visualize your breath “*sinking*” towards your navel and lower abdomen (*Xiao Fu Shi Yuan*, 小腹实圆). Old Chinese texts describe this action as your *Qi* (气) moving to your *Dan Tian* (*Qi Guan Dan Tian*, 气贯丹田). Focus your entire body only momentarily during this exhalation stage. The “Yup” sound should be very short and explosive, like a rock suddenly landing in a well, splashing the water upwards. The focused/tensed phase of your power release should terminate instantaneously (*Yi Fa Ji Zhi*, 一发即止). “*Fill*” your abdomen only during the focused/tensed phase.

诀曰：膈膜动力。

Oral Tradition: Diaphragm movement augments the focusing of your release/discharge of the balanced-force.

诀曰：发力时小腹实圆。

Oral Tradition: Allow your stomach to bulge outwards and visualize your breath sinking towards your navel and lower abdomen momentarily, only at the moment of tensing and focusing during a power release.

诀曰：横膈膜一发紧即错误。

Oral Tradition: It is wrong to tense your diaphragm.

NOTES: Practice this inhale-exhale sequence daily. Keep relaxed. Use soft focus interspersed with a small number of hard focuses.

## Level 2: Merge the two syllables into one syllable and move the combined sound to the back of the throat

When you have mastered the basics of the two distinct syllables, shorten the time interval between “Yee” and “Yup”. Eventually, “Yee” and “Yup” would merge and become one short combined sound. Though the two sounds become inseparable and indistinguishable, you must still retain the ability to “*lift*” (*Ti*, 提) your breath during “Yee” and “*sink*” (*Chen*, 沉) it during “Yup”. Do not tense your diaphragm.

### Level 3: Lower the sound into the chest and sink it into the lower abdomen

When you have mastered the combined sound, merged the syllables, proceed by internally transforming the sound from audible to inaudible. Maintaining your focus concentration, visualize your intended **Fa Li** (发力) action, adjust your body elements into the proper positions then suddenly “sink” (**Chen**, 沉) your breath to your lower abdomen (do not physically sink your body) and tense/focus your muscles while executing your **Fa Li** (发力). Immediately relax (**Yi Fa Ji Zhi**, 一发即止). Use internal transformation skill to gradually move the sound from audible to inaudible. The sound stimulation/enunciation is transformed internally to energy/power. Gradually work to enter the focused/tensed phase with less sound and finally with no sound and very little exhalation of breath (air).

诀曰：声由内转，气不外吐，声音要圆要整。

**Oral Tradition:** Use internal transformation skill to transform the grunting from audible to inaudible.

**Tests for Level 3:** When you practice inaudible breath controlled grunting, place your hand a couple of inches in front of your mouth while sounding off a silent “Yup”. You should feel very little air flow when doing this advanced exercise. Your entire body should feel a sort of “fullness” as you exhale. Another test: place a lighted candle close to your mouth when sounding off a silent “Yup”, the flame should not flicker or get blown out (**Qi Bu Wai Tu**, 气不外吐).

## Training Guideline

When you have mastered this practice of grunting (**Shi Sheng**, 试声) as an isolated exercise you must combine it with your practice of **Fa Li** (发力), using practical maneuvers/techniques, first in fixed-step then in free-step. “Try to figure out” (mentally visualize) your action prior to execution. Strive for simultaneity: the simultaneous expression of sound with a harmonized explosive discharge of a balanced-force (**Sheng Li Bing Fa**, 声力并发). Practice slowly; trial-and-feel with focus concentration. Do not rush or push yourself beyond your ability. Making up your workout with short periods of high-speed tensed focus efforts (hard **Fa Li**) interspersed with long periods of milder relaxed activity (soft **Fa Li**) seems to be the best training procedure. Do not execute too many tensed hard **Fa Li** in sequence as that will lead to stiff-ness and rigid-ness. The majority of your training should be relaxed soft **Fa Li**. The relaxed-tensed-relaxed exchange sequence of a tensed, hard, focused power release must be extremely fast. Also, occasionally you must do “burst in time interval training”: push your mind-body training/conditioning to the extreme limits to increase stamina and endurance.

诀曰:松多紧少。

Oral Tradition: In general, when training *Fa Li*, the majority of the repetitions should be mild soft relaxed *Fa Li*, interspersed with a small number of hard focused *Fa Li*. This seems to produce the best results in conditioning.

诀曰:一发即止。

Oral Tradition: *Fa Li* must be clean crisp and explosive. After *Fa Li*, immediately relax and be ready for a follow-up.

诀曰:养气之理,呼吸听其自然,不加注意为妙。

Oral Tradition: Let your breathing be natural; do not pay conscious attention to your breathing.

诀曰:声空叫则薄虚。

Oral Tradition: If grunting is not synthesized and harmonized to marshal the entire musculoskeletal body into concerted action, it simply becomes yelling.



## Chapter 5: Footwork (*Zou Bu*, 走步)

# 摩 擦 步

In Yiquan, footwork (*Zou Bu*, 走步) involves your whole-body (*Zheng Ti*, 整体), integrating core/torso maneuvers (*Shen Fa*, 身法), and it is used for defense, for evasion, for deception, for proper positioning, and for conserving energy. It is likely that your initial defensive or offensive move will begin with footwork. Superiority of footwork enhances and compliments all your maneuvers/techniques.

诀曰: 进 半 步 胜 人, 退 半 步 不 输。

Oral Tradition: Step forward to win; step backward to avoid losing.

诀曰: 步 不 快 则 拳 慢, 步 不 稳 则 拳 乱。

Oral Tradition: Slow footwork limits the speed of your attacks (punches); unstable footwork makes your attacks (punches) chaotic.

Footwork should be as instinctive, as natural, as spontaneous, and as easy as walking. To be a good fighter, you must have superior footwork to put you into superior positions. In this chapter, we present the basic principles of footwork (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步) and supplemental exercises in preparation for kicking maneuvers/techniques (*Tui Fa*, 腿法). Explore, extrapolate, and experiment; adapt, change, invent, and refine; from one thing you will know ten thousand things.

## Principles

The “*interval*” (the distance between you and your opponent) and the angles of attack are dynamic, and directly influence the execution of attack and defense maneuvers and tactics. By controlling the interval, angles, and timing, you gain an advantage over your opponent; you control the fight. Your proper “*fighting measure*” is your distance from your opponent at which he cannot hit unless he lunges fully at you. You should consistently stay “*out of distance*” so that your opponent cannot reach you with a simple punch (simple attack), but not so far that with a short advance you should be able to reach him. You can develop an instinctive sense or *feel* of this fighting measure only from experience, and you must be able to move smoothly and speedily using proper stepping techniques (**Bu Fa**, 步法) to achieve it.

诀曰：揣敌力量有方向，察来势之机会，度己身之短长。

Oral Tradition: Analyze your opponent’s forces – strength and directions; observe engagement opportunities; use proper fighting measure.

No one fights well without superior footwork. Effective footwork should allow you to retain your on-guard fighting posture (*frame*, **Jian Jia**, 肩架) during all movement, thus keeping you in a balanced, spring-like, harmonized whole-body unity from which you are capable of delivering *explosive* power. Proper footwork must overcome instability, maintain equilibrium (**De Zhong Ping**, 得中平); you must keep your feet solidly under your center of balance to deliver powerful strikes. Every movement must involve the coordination of your whole-body (hands, feet, torso, and mind; **Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong**, 一动无不动). To this end, Yiquan employs small rapid stepping and gliding footwork, and avoids leaping, hopping or jumping. Small rapid steps provide speed and controlled balance while bridging the *interval*, and ensure your equilibrium while in motion.

诀曰：步不快则拳慢，步不稳则拳乱。

Oral Tradition: Slow footwork limits the speed of your attacks (punches); unstable footwork makes your attacks (punches) chaotic.

诀曰：虚实实虚得中平。

Oral Tradition: Balance the opposites; maintain proper relationship between void and actuality, stillness and movement, appropriate substantial-ness and insubstantial-ness, to achieve centered-ness, level-ness, and equilibrium (stability).

Footwork should be spontaneous, instinctive, natural, easy, and relaxed, with your feet kept at a comfortable distance apart without any strain or awkwardness. Having your feet in the correct

(not fixed) position balances you properly and allows you to “*take up power from the ground*”; develop your innate ability.

诀曰:脚无定位,身无定势。

Oral Tradition: There are no fixed feet positions and no fixed body postures as long as you are able to take up power from the ground, maintain your equilibrium, and are able to deliver “*explosive power*” at will.

However, footwork is the cornerstone of “integrated whole-body action”; you must synthesize your head and core/torso maneuvers (*Shen Fa*, 身法) with your footwork.

诀曰:上欲动下自随,下欲动上自领,上下动中间攻,中间攻上下合,内外相连,前后左右相应而动。

Oral Tradition: When you move your upper body, your footwork should follow and carry you automatically; when you move your lower body, your upper body should lead spontaneously; when your upper and lower body combines, you are attacking with the middle; when you attack with your middle, your upper and lower body components are in harmony.

Next, we will describe in detail, training methods and procedures for Yiquan’s basic wading step footwork (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步). It is the basis and foundation for all footwork.

## Methods and Procedures

### A. Wading Step (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步)

Footwork training is basically trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercises for your legs and feet. You must “*feel*” with your footwork, listen to your body and read your muscles. Yiquan calls this training “*stepping with imaginary friction*” (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步). You imagine resistance against whichever direction your feet and legs are going, e.g.: visualize wading in thick, knee deep, muddy water and feel the water resistance against your movement. Keep your eyes focused on one spot as you practice stepping, do not look down. To focus your eyes on one point is the most important thing when you begin this practice. Balance, *level-ness*, and *centered-ness* (*Zhong Ping*, 中平) are achieved only through *connected-ness* and proper body *alignment* (*Zheng Ti Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 整体连通一贯). Visualize there is an imaginary string attached to the top of your head pulling it upwards (*Tou Xu Ling*, 头虚领); visualize your spine being mildly stretched (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力) while hanging vertically straight (*Yao Ji Gu*

*Chui Xian Cheng Zhi*, 腰脊骨垂线成直), and tuck-in your chin. This helps you to retain the proper posture. Bend both knees slightly (not straight or locked, *Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直); visualize imaginary spring connecting your knees (*Xiang Lian Xiang Zheng*, 相连相争); keep the feet directly under the body at a medium (comfortable) distance apart (*Ding Ba Bu*, 丁八步). Never fully straighten your legs; the knees and ankles are relaxed, loose and easy, not locked. For basic stepping training, you may extend your arms comfortably out from your sides for balance; visualize your hands holding on to imaginary hand railings.

诀曰:要内外放松,身躯挺拔,腰脊骨垂线成直,浑身大小关节,都含着似曲非直意。

Oral Tradition: Relax internally and externally, mentally and physically. Stand erect with your spine neutrally straight, all other body joints being slightly bent, not straight, and not locked.

#### a. Stepping Forward

Begin from a right-lead small-step (*Bu Ding Bu Ba Bu*, 不丁不八步) standing position with your weight distributed 30% front 70% back over your feet. Do not put too much weight on your heels (*Zu Gen Wei Xu*, 足跟为虚); “pick up” your left rear heel slightly (keep it touching the ground) to put some “spring” in your legs. Visualize standing in a knee-deep stream with a sticky muddy bottom lined with marbles. Extend your arms comfortably out from your sides for balance; visualize your hands holding on to imaginary hand railings. To step forward with your left foot, push off your left rear foot, *drilling* your left leg inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), shift your weight onto your right leg.

**Pull up** (*Ti*, 提): Employing all the visualizations described above, specifically with attention to the vertical *isometric-opposing-force-pair* (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力) between your head and your left foot, carefully *pull up* (*Ti*, 提) your left foot. Imagine that you are wearing slippers on your feet. As you step you must pull your foot straight up from the sticky wet muddy bottom, and maintain your sole parallel to the ground in order to keep the slipper from being pulled off your foot. Visualize a string attached to your left knee from above and pulls your leg straight up.

**Push Forward** (*Tang*, 趟): *Drive* your left foot forward with your left hip (*Ji*, 挤), with the outside edge of your left foot scrapping the imaginary marbles towards your supporting leg. Do not straighten your supporting leg. Keeping the left sole just slightly above the ground surface and parallel to it, use your torso to pull the left foot underneath your center of gravity and beside the right foot. Pushing off with your right leg, push your left hip forward (*Tu*, 吐) to *drive* your left foot forward (*Tang*, 趟) as if pushing the imaginary muddy water aside (*Tang Ni*, 趟泥) while keeping your left knee and ankle totally relaxed; visualize stretching the imaginary spring between your right hip and your left knee (*Qian Hou Zheng Li*, 前后争力). In wading and

gliding step, your sole should not touch the ground but should remain parallel to it as you move. Skim your foot just over the surface of the imagined muddy bottom you are moving on; imagine rolling your sole over the imaginary marbles and extend it a comfortable distance forward. Then, push your left foot to the left about a hip's width from your right foot (*Zuo You Zheng Li*, 左右争力); visualize stretching the imaginary spring between your right hip and left knee laterally (*Si Kai*, 撕开). Here it is important that the foot be *driven* forward from the torso (pushing off with your supporting leg and hip) as if *pushing* the imaginary muddy water aside (*Tang*, 趟); visualize stretching the imaginary spring connecting your knees (*Xiang Lian Xiang Zheng*, 相连相争); do not merely swing your foot out from the knee.

**Drill Down** (*Guo*, 裹): Place your left foot down toe first (ball of your foot first), then the whole foot (do not rock from heel to toe). Slight ground contact of the heel aids in balance and decreases tension; do not put much weight on your heel (*Zu Gen Wei Xu*, 足跟为虚). At this point, your weight is still on your right leg; you should be able to withdraw your left foot at will. As you plant your foot you should “*drill or twist*” on the ball of your foot (*Guo*, 裹) turning your left heel slightly outward (left knee twists inwards, *Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) then inward (left knee twists outwards, *Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), as if snuffing out a cigarette butt. These *drilling* actions should not be visible (*Luo Xuan Li Wu Xing*, 螺旋力无形).

**Grip** (*Pa*, 扒): Strive for a sense of *gripping* the ground with your toes (*Pa*, 扒) as if to pull yourself forward, shifting your weight forward. There is a backward force component (*Shun Li Ni Xing*, 顺力逆行); you should be able to reverse your forward motion at will. However, once on the ground, do not allow your foot to slide. Specifically, this is a common mistake in skating step (below).

**Contract** (*Suo*, 缩): Keep a sense of *aliveness* in your foot by *contracting* the arch (*Suo*, 缩) as if to pull your weight slightly forward. With weight bias towards the balls of your feet and not much weight on your heels, your legs are like loaded springs ready to move you in any direction. Shift some of your weight (approximately 30%) onto the left front foot. You should now be in the left-lead small-step posture (*Bu Ding Bu Ba Bu*, 不丁不八步).

Continue to step forward with your right foot: By *slightly drilling* the ball of your left foot outwards, turning your left heel slightly inward (left knee twists outwards, *Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋); push off your right leg, *drill* your right rear leg inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) shifting your weight into your left leg; pull (*Ti*, 提) your right foot straight up then drive it forward with your right hip (*Ji*, 挤), with the outside edge of your right foot scrapping the imaginary marbles towards your supporting leg. Do not straighten your supporting leg. Keeping the right sole just slightly above the ground surface and parallel to it, use your torso to pull the right foot underneath your center of gravity and beside the left foot. Then, push (*Tang*, 趟) it forward with your right hip (*Tu*, 吐) as if pushing the muddy water aside (*Tang Ni*, 趟泥) while keeping your right knee and ankle totally relaxed. Finally, push it one foot's width to your right scrapping the

imaginary marbles away with the inside edge, laterally stretching the imaginary spring between your left hip and your right knee. Place your right foot slightly to the right (one foot's width); toe first, then the whole foot with the “*drill*, grip, contract” (*Guo, Pa, Suo*, 裹, 扒, 缩) actions as planting your left foot. Shifting 30% of your weight onto your right foot, you should now be in the right-lead small-step posture (*Ding Ba Bu*, 丁八步).

诀曰: 上欲动下自随, 下欲动上自领。

Visualize leading your advance slightly with your forehead while lightly pushing up with the top of your head to maintain the mild elongation of your spine (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力). Tuck-in your chin, do not allow your chin to project forward. Feel, interact, harmonize, and meet the resistance forces of the surrounding. Keep your eyes focused on a distant target (point); do not look down (*Tou Xu Ling*, 头虚领).

诀曰: 假借无穷宇宙力。

Oral Tradition: Visualize harmonizing and interacting with the unlimited forces of the universe to pull you forward.

Since you do not want your opponent to know where your next step will be, even as you move forward, you must be able to withdraw or change direction with your foot instantly. If your foot contacts an obstacle you must be able to avoid it. You must cautiously step with the ability to instantaneously adapt and change direction.

Keep your eyes focused on a single spot and repeat this stepping exercise slowly until you can feel the resistance on your feet and legs; until it becomes second nature. Slow is smooth; smooth is fast. It is important that you use the visualizations described in your footwork practice. Maintain your whole-body harmony and equilibrium; develop your innate abilities; your goal is to be able to release power at any time (*Sui Shi Fa Li*, 随时发力) simply by setting your foot down at any position to take up power from the ground.

诀曰: 提, 趟, 裹, 扒, 缩。

Oral Tradition: PULL your foot up with the sole parallel to the ground. PUSH your foot forward as if pushing mud aside. DRILL with the ball of your foot as you step down to take up power from the ground. GRIP with your toes as you lower your foot down to the ground and CONTRACT the arch as if pulling yourself forward.

## **b. Stepping Backward**

From the left-lead small-step posture (*Ding Ba Bu*, 丁八步), *drill* your left knee outwards (turn left heel slightly, invisibly, inwards, *Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), shift all your weight onto your right

leg; using your core muscles, pulling backwards with your right hip (*Tun*, 吞), pull (*Ti*, 提) your left foot upwards with sole parallel to the ground, then withdraw it back underneath your center of gravity beside your right foot (scrapping the imaginary marbles laterally to your right towards your central line then backwards towards your supporting leg with the outside edge). Push off your right foot with invisible inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋); push (*Tang*, 趟) your left leg back until the left knee is almost (but distinctly not) straight (scrapping the imaginary marbles away with the inside edge). As you lower the left foot, toes first then the whole foot, onto the ground, allow your foot to come down at whatever angle that facilitates your balance and control. *Drill* your right knee outwards (turn right heel slightly, invisibly, inwards, *Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), shift the majority of your weight (70%) slowly onto your left leg, resulting in the right-lead small-step posture.

For stepping backward, follow all the postural and movement guidelines detailed for stepping forward. Employ the mental directed visualizations described above to facilitate your sense of meeting resistance, *feel* the resistance of the imaginary muddy water. When lifting your foot, pay attention to pull-up (*Ti*, 提); when pushing-backward (*Tang*, 趟) visualize stretching the imaginary spring connecting the knees; and when setting your foot down pay attention to *drill* with the ball (*Guo*, 裹), grip with the toes (*Pa*, 扒), and contract the arch (*Suo*, 缩).

In wading step (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步), either forward or backward, you step in a zigzag pattern while keeping your torso facing squarely in the forward direction (*Bu Xie Shen Zheng*, 步斜身正). Your torso and head may shift laterally from side to side as well as vertically up and down; keep your eyes focused on one target point.

诀曰：步斜身正，进退自如。

Oral Tradition: Step obliquely in a zigzag pattern while facing squarely to the front.

## B. Skating Step (*Da Bu*, 大步), Balancing Step, and Shuffle Step

### a. Skating Step

With a firm foundation in the wading step (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步), you may add a rear leg thrust to your forward stepping to make a skating step. All visualizations and requirements are the same as in wading. Begin by stepping forward with your left leg. When your left knee is almost straight, push off with your right supporting leg and hip to thrust your left foot forward another 15-20cm (roughly) before lowering it to the ground. Maintain your sole parallel to the ground as it is thrust forward. The ball of your left foot should contact the ground first. Do not allow your foot to slide once it touches the ground. As soon as your left foot is in complete contact with the

ground, immediately pull your right foot towards your left foot. You can end up in the small-step posture or you can bring your right foot close to your left foot to practice your balance in motion (*Zhong Ping*, 中平). The whole action is like skating. Practice the large balancing step (*Da Bu Ping Heng*, 大步平衡) going forward and backward; it is the foundation for snap kicks (*Dian Jiao*, 点脚).

## b. Shuffle Step

The vertical (forward/backward) shuffle step (aka fencing step) is the skating step with no change of lead. Assume the small-step ready posture; be sure to “pick up” your heels to put “spring” in your legs (*Zu Gen Wei Xu*, 足跟为虚). When stepping forward, push off the ground with your rear leg with invisible inwards *drilling* (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋); take up power from the ground (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) to *drive* your leading leg forward. Then, step rear leg forward into your ready posture. When stepping backward, push off the ground with your front leg with invisible outwards *drilling* (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋); take up power from the ground to *drive* your rear leg backward. Then, step front leg backward into the ready posture. Make sure your stance is not too long or too short.

When stepping laterally sideways (left/right), move the leg on the side nearest to the side you intend to step first; push off the ground with your off-side leg with invisible inwards *drilling*, take up power from the ground to drive your on-side leg laterally sideways one full step. Then, step your off-side leg ½ step laterally into your ready posture. Make sure your stance is not too narrow; your feet should be shoulder width apart.

Do not move your leading leg and then *drag* your body and your off-side leg forward, backward, or sideways. Keep your legs laterally at shoulder width apart so your stance do not become too narrow and unstable.

After you have mastered the single shuffle step (vertical forward/backward and lateral left/right side-steps), practice shuffling two steps forward and two steps backward, three steps forward and three steps backwards, laterally two steps sideways and three steps sideways, etc.

## C. Practical Footwork (*Bu Fa*, 步法, *Bian Bu*, 变步)

When you have built a foundation with (mastered) wading and skating steps, you can develop your own practical footwork. Be creative and always maintain your on-guard ready stance (see Chapter 8: Fighting). Although “mobility and speed of footwork”, and “speed of kicks and punches”, are all primary qualities of basic skills, “mobility and speed of footwork” precede “speed of kicks and punches”.



诀曰:步不快则拳慢,步不稳则拳乱。

Oral Tradition: Slow footwork limits the speed of your attacks (punches); unstable footwork makes your attacks (punches) chaotic.

Practical footwork may be divided into two broad categories:

- a. **Aggressive footwork** to put pressure on your opponent, to flank your opponent, to create openings for your attack. Initiate your action with footwork, move to a position and angle so your opponent must adjust his posture to face you again (superior position); then seize the initiative and attack him during his preparation (*Du Da*, 堵打) and/or during his development (*Jie Da*, 截打). This tactic usually involves either a direct step onto his center gate (*Zhong Men*, 中门), or an initial lateral flanking with corkscrew inward circling, or diagonal steps (forward or backward) followed by a direct step onto your opponent's center gate (*Heng Zuo Shu Zhuang*, 横走竖撞).

诀曰:步踏中门钻入重心夺敌位,即是神手亦难防。

诀曰:避其虚而击其实。

诀曰:进半步胜人。

Oral Tradition: Win by stepping forward.

NOTES: If you step to the outside of your opponent's lead foot, step up close to block his retreat. If you step to the inside of your opponent's lead foot, step in deep into the center gate (*Zhong Men*, 中门) and advance your elbow and/or shoulder to disturb his balance.

- b. **Evasive footwork** is used to remove you from the line of force while positioning for attack. When your opponent launches his attack, you should use footwork to remove yourself from the line of the attacking force. While evading, gain the best angle and position for a stop-hit or counter-attack (*Shan Da*, 闪打). This usually involves backward pass-over steps (walking/jogging backwards) or triangle side/back steps (backward diagonal steps) followed by forward skate steps. To be effective, you must synthesize core/torso maneuvers (*Shen Fa*, 身法) with your stepping. Defensive or evasive footwork should be non-linear and asymmetric; you must back-up (vertical) and/or move sideways (lateral).

诀曰:避其实而击其虚。

诀曰:退半步不输。

Oral Tradition: Avoid losing by stepping back.

NOTES: To retreat from your opponent's kicks is to give your opponent room, it is sometimes better to jam and smother his preparation (*Du Da*, 堵打); rush in close and stay there; use stop-hits. When evading your opponent's blows by footwork, keep near to him for countering, e.g., duck and counter, snap back and return, slip and punch, bob and weave, etc.

Since defense and offense must be unified as one, these categories are not mutually exclusive.

诀曰:攻守合一。

Oral Tradition: You must merge your offensive and defensive motions.

Initially your stepping practice will simply be vertical (forward/backward) a selected number of steps, however, footwork training must eventually become dynamic, non-linear, with no set pattern; practical footwork should never be linear or straight. The guiding principle for footwork is that you must always be on balance in motion, ready to fight.

诀曰:脚无定位,身无定势。

Oral Tradition: There are no fixed feet positions and no fixed body postures as long as you are able to take up power from the ground, maintain your equilibrium, and are able to *Fa Li* at will.

To move at the right time, to be in the best attacking position, means maintaining equilibrium, *level-ness*, and *centered-ness* (*De Zhong Ping*, 得中平) in motion (on balance). Short rapid steps ensure equilibrium/stability. The feet must always be directly under the body to take up power from the ground and to enable *Fa Li* at any time spontaneously (*Sui Shi Fa Li*, 随时发力). Feel the ground with the balls of your feet; do not put too much weight on your heels (*Zu Gen Wei Xu*, 足跟为虚) to provide “*spring*” in your legs; be ready to adapt and change your movement instantaneously.

诀曰:进半步胜人,退半步不输。

Oral Tradition: Step forward to win; step backward to avoid losing.

Be ready to “*give ground*” when your opponent attacks. Be ready to advance and “*put pressure*” onto your opponent to create openings. You must conceal your intended movement from your opponent. Your next step should surprise him; cause him to shift, move, or lose balance.

诀曰:意不有象。

Oral Tradition: Hide your intentions from your opponent.

In nearly all cases, you should move first the foot closest to the direction you intend to go in. If you wish to side-step to the left, push off your right leg and move the left foot first; if you wish to side-step to the right, push off your left leg and move the right foot first. Avoid narrowing your step (keep feet laterally at shoulder width) and avoid crossing your legs when stepping. Do not attempt to hit forward while backing away. Your weight has to shift forward to hit forward. Use core/body oscillation (*Zhen Dong*, 震动) to generate “spring-like” power (*Tan Li*, 弹力): step back, halt, and shift your body weight forward to hit forward. Always maintain your small-step fighting posture, perfect balance, and exacting distance, poised for attack. Use small rapid steps. The feet are not lifted but *glide* along the ground; both feet are on the ground at all times. By constantly being in small neutral motion, you can initiate your moves faster than from a fixed static position. A static position is an opening for your opponent to attack (*Shen Wu Ding Shi*, 身无定势). Make gravity, inertia, and momentum your allies to generate power (*Dong Dang*, 动荡). Use the up/down gravitational acceleration (*Zhong Li Bo*, 重力波) to induce/generate lateral left/right (*Heng Bo*, 横波) and/or vertical forward/backward (*Zong Bo*, 纵波) acceleration.

诀曰：重力波荡出纵横波。

Always use short steps, aim for simplicity with minimum movement. Combine push-hands, sparring, and shadow boxing (*Ji Ying*, 击影) with footwork to consolidate, test, change, invent, and refine your techniques. Simple “economical” footwork adds speed, and by moving just enough to evade your opponent’s attack, you can make him commit fully, exposing his openings, while remaining in range, in superior position to attack.

Adhere to the principle of coordinated whole-body harmony, optimal *alignment*, proper *connected-ness*, and using the ground: If one part moves, only move it as part of your whole-body, never independently, coordinate your spring-like whole-body so that every part (hands, feet, torso, and mind) moves in harmony.

诀曰：一动无不动。

Footwork should be as comfortable, instinctive, natural, spontaneous, and easy as walking. When you wish to advance your hands and head (upper body), your footwork should instinctively follow carrying your whole-body forward; when you wish to advance your feet (lower body), your hands and head should spontaneously lead the advance. In lead hand strikes, your lead foot should land prior to your blow connecting with your target in order to take up power from the ground. In rear hand strikes, the blow and the lead foot should “arrive simultaneously”.

诀曰：进头进手须进身，身手齐到法为真。

Oral Tradition: The whole-body must advance with the forward movement of the hands and head; the hands and body must arrive simultaneously.

诀曰:上欲动下自随,下欲动上自领,上下动中间攻,中间攻上下合,内外相连,前后左右相应而动。

Oral Tradition: When you move your upper body, your footwork should follow and carry you instinctively, automatically; when you move your lower body, your upper body should lead spontaneously; when your upper and lower body combines, you are attacking with the middle; when you attack with your middle, your upper and lower bodies are in harmony.

The wading step (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步) is the foundation for all footwork. While it is impractical to describe the dynamics of practical footwork in text form, we will briefly list some important footwork exercises below. All practical footwork is included in: stepping vertically forward/backward, sidestepping laterally left/right, stepping diagonally forward/backward, circling left/right, and pivoting/turning.

## 1. Vertical Forward/Backward Motion

**Forward/Backward Shuffle (*Da Bu*, 大步):** Carefully, step forward (*drive* your lead foot forward by first pushing off your rear foot) and step backward (*drive* your rear foot backward by first pushing off your front foot) without disturbing your body balance using small short steps. When advancing, the front foot leads then the rear foot follows ending in your small step on-guard posture. When retreating, the rear foot backs up first then the front foot follows ending in your on-guard posture. The feet are not “*lifted*” but glide along the ground; do not put much weight on your heels (*Zu Gen Wei Xu*, 足跟为虚), thus providing “*spring*” in your legs. The whole-body is poised for any maneuver. The forward step is used to obtain the correct *interval* for attacking. The backward step is used to draw your opponent in to within reach while staying out of reach. By constantly stepping vertically forward and backward, you can conceal your intentions and allows you to position yourself at the ideal *interval*, angle, and position for an attack. Keep out of distance and attack on the opponent’s advance. Once your opponent is committed in his advance, it is difficult for him to change his course rapidly. Visualize wading through muddy water. This vertical “*shuffle stepping*” (fencing step) is commonly used in single-hand push-hands (*Jin Tui Bu*, 进退步).

**Step-in/Step-out:** With your hands in high guard position, step in directly as if to hit/jab to put pressure on your opponent; then step out quickly before your opponent can adjust his defense. Repeat this maneuver to lure your opponent into a *motor-set*. Attack him when he is in a motor-

set or in a momentary lapse of attention by changing your tempo (cadence). Be ready to protect yourself as you retreat.

**Cushion Step (*Dian Bu*, 垫步):** With your weight off your heels, move your rear foot a half step or a full step forward behind your lead foot. Then, *drive* with your rear foot with invisible inward *drilling* (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋); push your whole-body and front foot forward into your on-guard small-step posture.

- a. From the left-lead small-step posture, push off with your right leg; slide your left lead foot forward half a step. Immediately bring your right foot forward towards your left ankle. Shift your weight onto your right leg (right heel not touching the ground); again push off your right leg and slide your left foot forward into a left-lead small-step posture. This stepping increases the power behind your lead hand straight punch (*Tang Bu Beng Quan*, 趟步崩拳) by putting your whole body inertia/momentum behind your blow (*Dong Dang Zhi Li*, 动荡之力).
- b. From the left-lead small-step posture, shift your weight onto your left leg. Pull your right leg forward half a step. Shift your weight onto your right leg with not much weight on your right heel; *drill* your leg to the ground with inward twist (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), take up power from the ground, to push your whole body forward half a step, ending in the left-lead small-step posture.

NOTES: Practice cushion step backwards. With your weight off your heels, move your front foot a half step or a full step backward towards your rear foot. Then, *drive* with your front foot with invisible outward *drilling* (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋); push your whole-body and rear foot backward into your on-guard small-step posture.

When you have mastered the single forward or backward cushion steps, practice double forward or backward cushion steps.

**Lead Leg Replacement:** Stepping back your lead foot a half step or a full step behind your rear foot followed by stepping forward with the same “lead” foot will avoid an attack (specifically a low level attack to your lead leg), catch your opponent off guard (timing), and increase your forward momentum in a forward power release (*Ban Bu Beng Quan*, 半步崩拳).

**Switching Lead Step:** Switch lead by stepping your lead foot back and your rear foot forward. Simultaneously, coordinate your movement with your whole-body and your on-guard posture, e.g., from a right-lead posture and outside right forearm engagement (*Quan Wai*, 圈外), disengage and switch lead to attack with a left lead to your opponent’s inside line (*Quan Nei*, 圈内; *Quan Li*, 圈里).

**Cross Step (Pass-over Forward/Backward):** From a left-lead posture, keeping your torso bladed to your opponent, bring your rear right foot forward in front of your left lead foot (crossing your legs) with the inside edge of your right foot facing forward in a reverse T-step. Then, step your left foot forward ahead of your right foot into a left-lead small-step posture. Reverse to back-up. Alternatively, by not turning your advancing rear foot toes outwards (no reverse T-step), keeping your torso square, you may simply “walk” forward/backward using “pass-over forward/backward steps”.

**Running (Jogging) Step:** Jog forward with small steps to press an attack (run on your opponent) on a retreating opponent; keep him on his heels. Do not lean forward; maintain your balance. While executing attacking (punch/strike) maneuvers while jogging, make sure you take up power from the ground; you should be able to deliver your blows with whole-body balanced-force at will (*Sui Shi Fa Li*, 随时发力).

## 2. Lateral Left/Right Motion

**Side-Step:** If your opponent launches a frontal attack, it is best to “get out of his way” by sidestepping. If you side step, your opponent must adjust his posture, angle, and position to follow. You have the initiative because you have moved first. If the distance is appropriate, you can step forward while he is moving to initiate your attack. To remove your center from the line of attack with side-stepping (*Shan Da*, 闪打), you should move late and quick. You should wait until your opponent is committed and then take a quick lateral side-step either to the right, left, or diagonal, shifting weight and changing feet without disturbing your equilibrium to gain angle and position to attack.

- a. **Side-step right from a right lead:** Move the right lead foot right a full lateral step or a full forward right diagonal step (forward triangle). Bring up the left foot to the right ½ step behind the right foot, wheel the body to your left and bring your right shoulder farther forward and closer to your opponent’s left rear.
- b. **Side-step left from a right lead:** Move the left foot to the left one full step or a full forward left diagonal step (forward triangle), wheel the left side of your body forward and the right side backward rotating towards your opponent’s right flank. Shifting your weight onto your left leg, withdraw your right foot towards your left ankle. With proper timing, pushing off with your left leg, thrust your hip forward and slide your right foot forward into an attack.
- c. **Side-step left from right lead (backward):** Push off your front right foot; shuffle your left rear foot one full step to your left or left rear backwards

diagonally (backward triangle); then withdraw your right foot ½ step to your left or left rear diagonally.

- d. **Side-step right from right lead (backward):** Step your right front foot right or right rear backward diagonally (backward triangle) a full step; then withdraw your left foot ½ step to your right or right rear diagonally.

NOTES: Maintain lateral stability by keeping your feet at shoulder's width apart. Lateral motion and diagonal motion are not mutually exclusive.

**Big Lateral Motion:** If you retreat rapidly by walking/jogging vertically backwards, you will eventually be over-run. You must switch to lateral motion after walking backwards for a few steps. Square your torso into a parallel-step posture; then pushing off your left (right) leg, move your right (left) leg a large step laterally to your right (left). Then move your left (right) leg towards your right (left) leg into a parallel-step posture. Again push off your left (right) leg to repeat your lateral stepping motion. Keep moving right (left) laterally in a circular movement for a few steps; reduce the radius of your circle to corkscrew into your opponent. Keep feet shoulder width apart for stability in motion; stay on your toes.

### 3. Diagonal Motion

**Back Diagonal Step 1:** From a left-lead posture, side step backward at 45 degrees (diagonal backward triangle) to your left rear with your left foot; follow by forward step with your right foot, switching from left-lead to right-lead or step your right foot back behind your left foot into a left-lead.

**Back Diagonal Step 2:** From a left-lead posture, side step backward 45 degrees (diagonal backward triangle) to your right rear with your rear right foot, follow by side step backward (diagonal) with your lead left foot retaining your left-lead posture or follow by side step backward (diagonal) with your lead left foot behind your right foot into a right-lead posture.

**Forward Triangle Step 1 (Swing Step):** From the left-lead small-step posture, step your right rear foot forward at a 45 degrees angle to your right (diagonal forward triangle); then wheel left and swing your left leg behind your right leg to form a right-lead small-step posture. Use this stepping to move away from the line of force.

**Forward Triangle Step 2 (Swing Step):** From the left-lead small-step posture, step your left front foot forward at a 45 degrees angle to your left (diagonal forward triangle); then wheel right and swing your right leg behind your left leg to form a left-lead small-step posture. Use this stepping to move away from the line of force.

**Back Triangle Cross Step:** This is an exception to the general rule of not crossing your legs. From a right-lead, step your left rear foot to the right behind your leading right foot (crossing your legs). Then step your lead right foot to your right and/or wheel your body to your left to return to your right-lead on-guard posture.

#### 4. Circular Motion

**Circling Step (*Huan Rao Bu*, 环绕步):** To further simplify footwork, you may consider all stepping to be included in: circle right, circle left, advance, and retreat. Typically, to avoid crossing your legs, you should move first the foot closest to the direction you intend to go.

- a. When circling right from a right-lead posture, step your right lead foot right and forward (diagonal, forward triangle). Pivot on your right lead leg; wheel your whole-body to your left and bring your right shoulder forward. Keep hands high, lead with your right while guard with your left. You are now in your opponent's open gate (*Kong Men*, 空门) at an angle to his body plane.
- b. When circling left from a right-lead posture, step your left rear foot “left and forward” (diagonal, forward triangle), use very short steps. Pivot on your left leg, wheel your whole-body to your right while stepping your right foot forward into a right-lead posture or behind your left foot into a left-lead posture. Make sure your feet are kept shoulder’s width apart (laterally) to provide stability.

You use circle steps (forward diagonal, forward triangle step) to seize the initiative. If distance and timing are appropriate, circle stepping and your attacking lead hand should *arrive simultaneously* (*Shen Shou Qi Dao*, 身手齐到). Leading with the forward hand and guarding with the rear hand while moving diagonally or to the side decreases the “*opening*” that results from a normal frontal lead.

**Corkscrew Lateral Motion:** Square up your torso into a parallel-step posture to face your opponent; then pushing off your left (right) leg, move your right (left) leg a large step laterally to your right (left). Repeat. Keep moving right (left) laterally in a circular motion for a few steps. You may decrease/increase the radius of your circle to adjust your “distance *interval*” to “corkscrew” into or away from your opponent.



## 5. Turning/Pivoting Motion

**Toe-Out Toe-In Turning Step (4 step circle):** From the parallel-step posture, turn your right toe outwards (toes pointing right) while stepping your right foot in front of your left foot in a reverse T-step; turn your torso 90 degrees to your right. Then step your left foot in front of your right foot while turning your left foot toe inwards (toes pointing right) in a T-step; turn your torso another 90 degrees to your right. Pivot on the ball of your right foot into a parallel-step posture. Your torso has turned 180 degrees with these two steps. Repeating these two steps turns you around in a 360 complete circle. This step is useful to go around the outside of your opponent. If you use a high step, this exercise includes training for thrust kicks.

**180 Degrees Turns:** Learn to turn quickly to defend against attacks from different directions and from your back. Combining back fist strikes and/or lateral strikes (*Ce Pi*, 侧劈) into your turn adds power into your swing.

- a. **Right 180 turn from the left-lead small-step posture:** Turn to your right on the balls of your feet ending in right-lead small-step posture facing 180 degrees from the original direction. Or, turn your lead left foot toe inward (left toes pointing right) in a T-step, shift your weight onto your left leg, pivot to your right to complete the 180 degrees turn.
- b. **Left 180 degree & hop turn from the left-lead small-step posture:** From the left-lead small-step posture, step your right foot in front of your left foot while turning your right toe inwards in a T-step (right toe pointing left); shift your weight onto your right leg, pivot left 180 degrees. Or, from a left-lead posture, lift your left leg while pushing off with your right leg; hop upwards and forward, turning left 180 degrees, landing on your left foot first. Then step forward your right foot into a right-lead small-step posture.

NOTES: You can do right “180 hop turn” from your left-lead posture.

### Right 90 degrees turn from left-lead:

- a. **Forward Step Turn:** Shift your weight forward onto your left leg, turn right 90 degrees while stepping your right foot 90 degrees to your right into right-lead small-step posture.
- b. **Backward step turn:** Step your left foot to your left, shift your weight onto your left leg while turning 90 degrees to your right into a right-lead small-step posture.

### Left 90 degrees turn from left-lead:

- a. **Forward Step Turn:** Shift your weight onto your right rear leg, withdraw your left leg towards your supporting leg, pivot left 90 degrees and step forward with your left leg into a left-lead small step posture.
- b. **Backward step turn:** Shift your weight onto your left lead leg, step your right leg forward to your right, pivot left 90 degrees into a left-lead small step posture.

NOTES on evasiveness: Use footwork to evade attacks without actually moving your body out of range frees your hands for countering, e.g., slipping, ducking, snap back, sliding roll, and bob and weave, etc. Do not keep your body static; a stationary posture is an opening, an invitation for an attack.

诀曰:脚无定位,身无定势。

诀曰:落脚便是处。

Oral Tradition: There should not be any fixed feet positions and/or fixed body postures as long as you are able to take up power from the ground, maintain your equilibrium, and discharge/release power (*Sui Shi Fa Li*, 随时发力) at will.

## D. Kicking Training (*Tui Fa*, 腿法)

The following are training and conditioning exercises in preparation for kicking. When you lift one leg to kick, you greatly decrease your stability; therefore, kicking should be used sparingly and not be higher than waist level. (Also, see Appendix E.)

诀曰:抬腿半边空。

Oral Tradition: Lifting your leg makes that side of your body “empty”.

### a. Stationary Stepping

This is preliminary training and conditioning for snap kicks. Stand erect. Lift the hands comfortably to your sides for balance; visualize holding onto imaginary hand railings. Sink your weight into your left (slightly bent supporting) leg. Lift your right foot slightly off the ground, sole parallel to the ground. Visualize there is a small sand bag balanced over the top of your

right foot. Using your torso (core), hip, and leg, move your right (non-supporting) leg slowly forward then one foot's width to your right, "delivering" the imaginary sand bag to your right front until your right knee is almost straight (where you would place your right foot for the right-lead small-step posture). Keep your right foot close to but do not lower your right foot to the ground; visualize stretching the imaginary springs connecting your right foot to your right shoulder and connecting your knees. Slowly, using your whole-body, pull your right leg back and deliver the imaginary sand bag to your back and right until your right knee is almost straight. Keep the imaginary sand bag from falling off your foot; move it backward, forward, to your side, clockwise, counter-clockwise, etc.

NOTES: Complement this with relaxed-standing in small-step posture on one leg (*Du Li Zhuang*, 独立桩). That is, when standing in the small-step posture, lift your front foot off the ground. Visualize a spring connecting your front ankle to your neck. Feel the vertical connection between your ankle and neck. Relaxed-standing in the large-step posture (*Tame-the-tiger* posture, *Fu Hu Zhuang*, 伏虎桩) will also contribute to your stepping and kicking practice by increasing your lower body strength and whole-body stability.

## **b. Pushing Springs with Your Foot**

This is preliminary training and conditioning for thrust kicks.

1. Stand in the small-step posture. Visualize imaginary springs attaching your front foot to the ground and to your neck. Slowly pull your front knee upward to navel level; keep your sole parallel to the ground. Visualize stretching the imaginary springs under your foot (feel the spring tension pulling down on your foot) and compressing the imaginary springs between the foot and the neck; keep your toes pointing towards the front (forward). Now slowly press your foot down. Visualize compressing the imaginary springs under your foot and stretching the imaginary springs between the foot and the neck. Repeat this exercise with the outside edge of your foot forward, then with the inside edge of your foot forward. You can also start with the outside edge forward and end with the inside edge forward, and vice versa.
2. Assume the left-lead small-step posture. Drive all your weight into the forward foot and balance over it as you bring the right leg forward; project the right foot slightly forward of the left foot at roughly knee height above the ground with the toes pointing right, sole parallel to the ground. Visualize imaginary springs under the right foot connecting it to the ground, as well as imaginary springs connecting the right foot to the neck. Slowly and evenly step (thrust) your right foot downwards, visualize compressing the spring under your foot. Feel the pull on the springs connected to your neck and right shoulder. Slowly bring the right foot up and feel the relative tension/relaxation exchange in the respective springs.

Repeat with the toes pointed left. Repeat with the toes turning left to right, and vice versa. Perform this exercise on both sides. Feel with the whole-body; allow your body to experience the whole-body coordination.

## Wading step with thrust-kick (*Deng Ta Jiao*, 蹬踏脚) and snap-kick (*Dian Jiao*, 点脚)

Examples of basic training and conditioning exercises for kicking:

- a. Side step with lead foot, side thrust kick (outside edge forward) with rear foot. Visualize stretching the imaginary springs between your kicking foot and the opposite shoulder.
- b. Forward step with lead foot, thrust kick with rear foot with inside edge forward. Visualize stretching the imaginary springs between your kicking foot and the same side shoulder; there is a twisting of your torso.
- c. Forward step with lead foot, front snap kick with rear foot to the front (to strike your opponent's shin with your toe) or to the side (to strike your opponent's inner thigh with your shin). Visualize stretching the imaginary springs between your kicking foot and the same side shoulder; there is a twisting of your torso.
- d. Side step, pivot; strike your opponent's outside thigh with your shin with a low swing kick; bring your kicking leg up then swing it downwards.

(For details, see Chapter 8: Fighting and Appendix E: Kicks and Knee Strikes (*Tui Fa*, 腿法))

## Summary

Footwork is the basis upon which everything is built. You must always be on balance in motion, positioning your weight for the execution of your next maneuver, be ready to fight, be ready to take up power from the ground to discharge/release your power at will (*Sui Shi Fa Li*, 随时发力). On balance in motion provides stability; postural stability allows you to change and adapt according to your opponent. Practice your footwork until they become “habit”, until they are as natural as walking. This means, whenever you stop your stepping, your feet are where you want them to be to execute your next maneuver. Superiority of footwork enhances and compliments all your maneuvers/techniques.

## Chapter 6: Power (*Fa Li*, 发力)



Discharging/releasing crisp clean balanced-force suddenly and explosively to displace your opponent, disturb his equilibrium, and/or to damage him is the foundation of effective hand-to-hand fighting.

诀曰：内劲需能爆发为外力始能收到练拳之真实益处。

Oral Tradition: The real benefit of martial arts training and conditioning is the ability to “explode” (*Bao Fa*, 爆发) your “internal strength” (*Nei Jing*, 内劲) as “external force” (*Wai Li*, 外力).

诀曰：把力打到身外。

Oral Tradition: You must develop the ability to discharge/release your balanced-force onto targets outside of your body.

Yiquan uses your head, shoulders, elbows, forearms, hands, hips, knees, feet, or any other part of your body as impact/contact points (*Li Dian*, 力点) to deliver this focused balanced-force onto your opponent. The ability to discharge/release power from these impact/contact points can be improved with practice and conditioning. You must cultivate/develop the skills of the power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力) until it become totally reflexive/spontaneous, requiring no thought or effort to discharge/release the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力).

In this chapter, we explore the principles and basic skills of power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力), and describe in detail the forward upward (*Xiang Qian*, 向前), backward downward (*Xiang Hou*, 向后), and lateral (*Xiang Heng*, 向横) releases. Explore, experience, experiment, and think; it is absolutely necessary to master *Fa Li* in these three principal directions. Take them to

the extremes, examine their opposites; change, invent, and refine; from one *Fa Li* method you will know ten thousand methods.

NOTES: Beginning students must practice power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力) with proper guidance because bad habits, once ingrained, are very troublesome to correct/fix.

## Principles

The essence of effective fighting includes among other things, perfectly controlled equilibrium in mobility (stability in motion; *level-ness* and *centered-ness*; *Zhong Ping*, 中平), endurance, tactics, whole-body neuromuscular coordination (*Zheng Ti De Li*, 整体得力), speed, and simplicity of maneuvers. Underlying these, you must be able to “*explode*” your power onto your opponent (爆发内力为外力). You must control your opponent's balance, and move decisively to deliver your blows with sudden “*explosive burst of power*” (*Xun Meng De Bao Fa Li*, 迅猛的爆发力). The power of the blows must come from your coordinated harmonized whole-body action (*Zheng Ti Lian Guan Xie Tiao*, 整体连贯协调), and not just from localized forces (*Ju Bu Li*, 局部力) of your limbs. In general, “*drilling*” with your legs (*Tui Si Zuan*, 腿似钻) to push off the ground, using a “*pure ground path*” (*Li Cong Zu Sheng*, 力从足生), a clean path-of-force-propagation (*Jing Lu Tong Chang*, 劲路通畅), shifting your weight from one leg to the other, pivoting to torque your hips and upper body in the same direction as the strike will produce fast, explosive maximum force. The musculoskeletal structure must be optimally *aligned* (*Gu Ge Zhi Cheng*, 骨骼支撑) to support the weight of the body freeing the muscles to propel the properly *connected* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) whole-body and the impact/contact point.

诀曰：一 动 无 不 动。

诀曰：一 动 全 身 转。

诀曰：浑 身 气 力 匀 整, 全 身 力 一。

Every action must involve the coordination of concurrent sequential overlapping movements of every neuro and musculoskeletal element (hands, feet, torso, head, and mind) of your whole-body (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动); merge all actions as *one*; merge all force components as *one* (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一); mind and body must work in synch.

诀曰：不 觉 力 之 力, 莫 大 於 变 化。

Relaxed initiation is absolutely necessary to maximize speed and acceleration. A good power discharge/release is “*effort-less*” (*Bu Jue Li Zhi Li*, 不觉力之力); the movements of the action must flow with no thought and no conscious effort. Any excessive antagonistic tension acts as a

brake, slows and weakens the action. The ability to control the impulses to the antagonist muscles, allowing them to relax and perform with minimal antagonistic tension (*interference*; **Gan Rao**, 干扰) yet retaining the ability to reverse, change direction, and adapt to the actions of your opponent (*agility*), is crucial for efficient delivery of the balanced-force (**Hun Yuan Li**, 浑元力).

Relaxed-standing (**Zhan Zhuang**, 站桩), trial-and-feel (**Shi Li**, 试力), grunting with reversed breathing (**Shi Sheng**, 试声), and footwork (**Zou Bu**, 走步) practices prepare you to effectively deliver your power. Relaxed-standing integrates and re-patterns your neuromuscular system to fire at the proper sequence from an equilibrium spring-like whole-body harmony unity (**Ji Rou Ru Yi**, 肌肉如一); you seek, sense, perceive, and cultivate your all-direction balanced-force (**Hun Yuan Li**, 浑元力) here. Trial-and-feel coordinates the neuromuscular system to function in unison, your mind and body working in synch to harmonize your action and force; you feel (kinesthetic perception), trial (self-exploration), and learn from experience; perceiving with body experience (**Ti Ren**, 体认) to try to figure out and synthesize your all-direction balanced-force with whole-body coordinated movement (**Quan Shen Li Yi**, 全身力一). But these still do not guarantee your success in efficient and effective power discharge/release. Spring-like power (**Tan Li**, 弹力) comes from neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange (**Song Jin Zhuan Huan**, 松紧转换) and whole-body core/torso oscillation (**Zheng Ti Gu Dang**, 整体鼓荡). To be a powerful fighter you must be able to “explode” (**Zha Li**, 炸力) your whole-body strength, quickly suddenly with acceleration, as external force (**Wai Li**, 外力) onto your target. A powerful fighter must learn to make fast correct whole-body movements, through trial-and-feel (**Shi Li**, 试力) and power release (**Fa Li**, 发力) exercises, to increase the “explosive-ness” and “sudden-ness” of the power discharges/releases (**Bao Fa Li**, 爆发力). (A strong person is not necessarily a powerful fighter.)

诀曰：需能爆发内劲为外力。

Oral Tradition: Cultivate the ability to explode your internal strength as external force.

诀曰：蓄，弹，惊，炸。

Oral Tradition: Relax and bend your joints to *store* energy (**Xu**, 蓄), extend and flex your joints with *elastic* spring-like force (**Tan**, 弹), discharge clean crisp force *suddenly* instantaneously as if *startled* (**Jing**, 惊), *explode* your internal energy as external force onto your opponent (**Zha**, 炸).

You must “take up power from the ground”. An example of the “*path-of-force-propagation*” (**Jing Lu**, 劲路) for an explosive forward pushing power release is as follows: Start with pushing off with your rear foot (*drilling* your rear leg downwards with inward leg twisting; **Nei**

*Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) while mildly opposing the forward movement with your front leg (*drilling* your front leg downwards with inward leg twisting; *Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋); visualize squeezing the imaginary balloon between your knees (*Jia Xi Fa Li*, 夹膝发力) while shifting your weight forward; continue with straightening of the ankles, the knees, and the torso (visualize stretching the imaginary springs between your feet and your head); add the shoulder rotations, the upper arm swings, extending the elbows, and culminate in forearm twists (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) and wrist snaps. The timing of the concurrent sequential overlapping motion of each segment adds its speed to that of the others; the final acceleration of the impact/contact point being the fastest. Whole-body *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) and harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体谐调) are prerequisites of a good clean explosive power release.

诀曰:顺生于自然,不觉其力也,故谓之浑元。

Good power discharge/release is *instinctive, natural, and effort-less* (*Bu Jue Li Zhi Li*, 不觉力之力); the movements must flow with no thought and no conscious effort. It is important to initiate the whole-body action instinctively from a relaxed state as if nothing critical is happening (*Xu*, 蓄). When the muscles tighten up inappropriately, your speed and skill are handicapped. A low degree of tension in the prime mover muscles use less energy; too early contractions of the antagonist muscles wastes energy. Coordination and efficient movement requires the opposing muscles to be able to relax and lengthen readily and easily. *Comfortable natural ease* of your action (*Shu Zhan, Zi Ran, De Li*, 舒展, 自然, 得力) is required; harmony of physical action is prerequisite to harmony of force.

Let us examine the essential elements and concepts to nurture, cultivate, and master the balanced-force for an explosive power discharge/release.

## Essential Elements of an “*Explosive*” Power Discharge (*Bao Fa Li*, 爆发力)

You may consider the *explosive* power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力) to consist of a relaxed (*Song*, 松) storing phase (*Song Yi Xu Jing*, 松以蓄劲) and a tense (*Jin*, 紧) discharge/release phase (*Jin Yi Fa Li*, 紧以发力).

诀曰:回以蓄劲,伸以发力,回伸须致用,遍体似弹簧。

During the storing phase (whether in fixed-step or free-step), you must maintain your elastic spring-like whole-body harmony; every body component/element should be like a coiled spring, ready for action (*Bian Ti Si Tan Huang*, 遍体似弹簧); be relaxed and ready to deliver your balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) in any direction.

诀曰:动静处中,合乎自然,合乎需要,应机而发,因势而变,能守能用。



Your whole-body is appropriately *relaxed* (*Dong Jing Chu Zhong*, 动静处中) but not limped or physically lax.

诀曰: 松以蓄劲, 紧以发力, 松紧紧松无波不浪。

Then, mentally focus and direct this stored power (*Xu*, 蓄) to “burst” out like releasing a compressed spring (*Tan*, 弹) instantaneously and suddenly (*Jing*, 惊) and explosively (*Zha*, 炸), using a well-practiced technique. The sudden-ness should startle (*Jing*, 惊) your opponent. Harmony of physical action is prerequisite to harmony of force. Each power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力) movement is the result of muscles working in harmony, in coordination. If the antagonist muscles contract too early, the power release will be weak. At the precise moment of releasing, i.e., “on contact” with your target (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发), tense and focus your power (*Jin Yi Fa Li*, 紧以发力) to punch through to the backside (*Li Tou Di Bei*, 力透敌背) of your opponent; your whole-body tenses momentarily (*focus*, *Jin*, 紧) to increase the “mass” behind your strike as you “snap” your blow through your target. The “period” (time interval) of this instantaneous focusing cycle (relaxation-tension-relaxation exchange, *Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) must be very fast and very short.

诀曰: 力之爆发皆在一瞬间。

Oral Tradition: Explode your internal strength as external force in the blink of an eye.

诀曰: 一触即发, 浑元一争, 一发即止。

Immediately after the *focused* (tensed) power discharge/release, return to your relaxed whole-body harmony state (*Yi Fa Ji Zhi*, 一发即止); be ready to execute the follow-up power discharge/release; do not freeze and admire the result of your discharge/release. Maintain your equilibrium/stability through out the relaxation-tension-relaxation sequence, your power discharge/release may have a primary direction but must not have an absolute direction (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争).

The following essential elements and/or source of power are inter-related, inseparable, and influence each other; all are present concurrently in a power discharge/release; we only isolate them for ease of presentation:

**Intentional Component** (*Li You Yi Fa*, 力由意发): Mentally you must have the determination and confidence to win. Courage plays a decisive role in any conflict/confrontation. If you have doubts, are afraid of being hit, etc., you will not be mentally in focus, will not be relaxed, and will not deliver your blows with explosive full power. Without mental determination and courage all your techniques are useless.

诀曰:以意领力,意到力到,意力不分。

诀曰:力透敌背。

Stay mentally focused, concentrate, and be totally in the moment; be “*in the zone*” (*De Li*, 得力) so your mind and body are synthesized, are working in synch and physical movements flow with no conscious effort. Initially, practice focusing your mind-intent to guide your action and force (*You Yi Er Lian*, 有意而练). Eventually, with practice, your mind-intent and force will merge, become inseparable and indistinguishable (*Yi Li Bu Fen*, 意力不分). Visualize your force penetrating through your target to the backside of your opponent, terminating several inches behind your target.

**Relaxed initiation and delivery** (*Song Yi Xu Jing*, 松以蓄劲): A relaxed harmonized coordinated whole-body is essential for a fast powerful explosive discharge/release. To a large extend, maximum increase in acceleration implies maximum force.

诀曰:用意不用力。

诀曰:顺生于自然,不觉其力也。

诀曰:把力打到身外。

Learn to deliver whole-body power *effortlessly* with *comfortable natural ease* of movement (*Li Ying Song Zheng*, 力应松整); let the movement flow with no conscious effort, your arms shoot out loosely, with no muscular tension, do not focus until they connect. Stay relaxed until the moment of impact; then focus (tense) on contact (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发). To strike through and damage your target, the increase in acceleration must be maintained as long as there is contact.

NOTES: Excessive antagonistic tension slows and weakens the action; increases the energy expenditure resulting in early fatigue. When discharging power (*Fa Li*, 发力), if you feel your strength “*inside*” any part of your body, you are making some mistakes; your effort to *explode* your internal power/strength as external force (把力打到身外) is not successful.

**Take up power from the ground** (*Li Cong Di Qi*, 力从地起): Your major power comes from the reaction of the forces of pushing your rear leg downward and backward and simultaneously *drilling* your front leg downward and forward (*Tui Si Zuan*, 腿似钻). Add to this power by using the inertial/momentum force of shifting your weight, and by pivoting the hips (*Yao Si Che Lun*, 腰似车轮) and shoulders prior to the striking point (impact/contact point) reaching the target (focused) zone (central line of the body). You can use either a waist or a full-body pivot.

诀曰:力从足生,拔地欲飞。

Proper musculoskeletal *alignment* and optimal *connected-ness* would *conduct (transmit) the ground* to your blow (using a *pure ground path* – Mike Sigman) through appropriate “path-of-force-propagation” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路).

诀曰:骨骼支撑,关节灵活,气力匀整,舒展连通,协调一贯,全身力一。

Allow your skeletal bone structure to support your body weight, freeing your *relaxed* muscles to pivot your body and propel your blow (*Shu Zhan Lian Tong*, 舒展连通). Whole-body harmony and *connected-ness* (*Xie Tiao Yi Guan*, 协调一贯) is required to merge force components as one (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). By stepping forward into your strike, you may generate additional force by using momentum.

**Opposites** (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力): The mentally induced all-direction balanced isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Hun Yuan Zheng Li*, 浑元争力) between different parts of your body (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力) during power discharge/release provide very fast *elastic “spring-like force”* (*Tan Li*, 弹力).

诀曰:用意念把力回争即争力。利用全身相争之弹力,突然发力。

This is the result of mentally induced coordinated contraction (*Hui*, 回) and extension (*Shen*, 伸) of appropriate muscles (*Song Jin Mao Dun*, 松紧矛盾).

诀曰:欲往前发则先后争。欲往后发则力向前争。

诀曰:欲往上则先下,欲下则先上,欲左应向右,欲右应向左。

The most important isometric-opposing-force-pair is the vertical (up/down) pair (visualize imaginary springs connecting your head to your feet; *Tou Xu Ling*, 头虚领; *Jiao Xia Cai*, 脚下踩). You should *feel* your back *coil invisibly* during the store/preparation stage and *uncoil invisibly* during the release stage. (This mentally induced physical coil/uncoil action must not be visible; an awareness of the tension is sufficient.) All your joints must open concurrently, the overlapping sequential straightening motions (flexing of your joints) add to the speed of delivery. Visualize stretching the imaginary springs from your feet to your head as you discharge your force (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力). Also, pay attention to the lateral (visualize imaginary spring between the wrists; *Zuo You Zheng Li*, 左右争力) and forward/backward (visualize imaginary springs between the front knee and the rear hip; between the hands and the back of your neck; *Qian Hou Zheng Li*, 前后争力) isometric-opposing-force-pairs. Your power release must be balanced, having a primary direction but no absolute direction (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争).

诀曰:整体肌肉拉力,相连相争,共争一中。

That is, visualize stretching or compressing these isometric imaginary springs simultaneously from the center (*Gong Zheng Yi Zhong*, 共争一中) to generate “elastic” spring-like force (*Tan Li*, 弹力).

**Curved form and spiral-winding motion** (*Yao Si Che Lun Tui Si Zuan*, 腰似车轮腿似钻): *Frame* (*Jian Jia*, 肩架), movement, and weight shift all play important roles in generating power. Do not lock your joints; keep all joints flexible (*Guan Jie Ling Huo*, 关节灵活), between 90 and 180 degrees (*Qu Xu Bu Wei*, 曲蓄部位; *Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直); discharge/release linear balanced-force from curved physical form (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直).

诀曰：一 动 全 身 转。

诀曰：夹 腿 抖 腰，出 入 螺 旋 式。

Use the natural winding of your musculature to induce spiral/helical movement in your motions, especially in your leg *drills* (*Tui Si Zuan*, 腿似钻), waist rotations (*Yao Si Che Lun*, 腰似车轮), forearm twists, and wrist snaps. These rotational motion (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋) enables you to improve accuracy, alter your target in mid-stream, and change direction of a force. Motion of every element is the result of the coordination of spiral/helical motions in your whole-body (*Yi Dong Quan Shen Zhuan*, 一动全身转), never move an element independently, all movement involves *drilling* of the legs, pivoting of the torso, and twisting of the arms and wrists (*Duo Mian Luo Xuan*, 多面螺旋).

**Core/Torso Oscillation** (*Zhen Dong*, 震动, *Bo Lang*, 波浪): You may generate elastic spring-like power (*Tan Li*, 弹力) by oscillating your body (core/torso) like an elastic spring oscillating about an equilibrium point.

诀曰：由 整 体 动 荡 中 求 弹 力。

Again, let’s begin by considering the body movement of the basic fixed-step explosive forward-push power discharge/release.

诀曰：用 意 念 把 力 回 争 即 争 力，欲 往 前 发 则 先 后 争。

In the store phase (*Hui Xu*, 回蓄), use mind-intent to induce the loading of internal imaginary springs for *Fa Li* (用意念把力回争), visualize pushing off your front leg stretching the imaginary springs between your knees (*drill* your legs and twist outwards to open your knees slightly; *Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) and between your front foot and your head; this mentally induced loading must not be physically visible (欲往前发则先后争).

诀曰：两足重量三七互换。

Then, you may start with pushing off the rear foot with inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), shifting your weight forward, pushing (*drilling* inward; *Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) backward and upward with your front foot, twisting your knees inward (squeeze the imaginary balloon between your knees), continue with straightening/opening of the ankles, the knees, the hips and the torso, adding the shoulder rotations, the upper arm swings, extending the elbows and culminating in forearms twists and wrists snaps. Through concurrent sequential overlapping motions, each segment adds its speed to that of the others, the final phase of the hand movement being the fastest. This increase in acceleration should be initiated immediately on contact (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发) and maintained as long as there is contact. Keep your front knee relatively stationary as if braced from all sides; your front knee must never move forward of your front toe. (The angle between your front foot and shin must never be smaller than 90 degrees.) Your hands, head, and lead foot must *arrive simultaneously* (*Shou Zu Qi Dao*, 手足齐到), stretching the imaginary springs between your feet and head, between wrists and neck, and between your wrists, etc. (*Hun Yuan Zheng Li*, 浑元争力). You may visualize your body as a hammer and your forearms as nails. Imagine that your upper arms and shoulders do not exist. By pushing off your rear leg, shifting your weight forward, you use your whole-body (core/torso) as a hammer (*Lang Tou*, 榔头) to drive your arms (nails) forward (*Lang Tou Kao Da*, 榔头拷打). In the process, your weight distribution shifts from 70% on your back leg 30% on your front leg to 30% on your back leg 70% on your front leg; then, snap back in reverse, push off your front foot and shift back to your original on-guard posture to be ready for follow up releases.

诀曰：松以蓄劲，紧以发力，松紧紧松无波不浪。

诀曰：波浪主要需有弹力，弹力遇物即须爆发为炸力，即蓄弹惊炸也。

Therefore, your body (core/torso) oscillates like a wave (*Bo Lang*, 波浪), driving your arms to produce and deliver power (*Gen Jie Cui Dong*, 根节催动). Small amplitude rapid core/torso oscillation is the foundation of elastic “spring-like force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力); when connecting with your target, *explode* this spring-like force onto it with maximum power (*Bao Fa Wai Zha Li*, 爆发为炸力). Whole-body coordination, harmony of action, and spring-like oscillation are required to maximize the force (acceleration).

**Change of Momentum:** Make gravity, inertia, and momentum your allies; avoid using muscles against momentum. In fighting, your body movement is complicated, including swaying (*Dong Dang*, 动荡), body pivots, up/down, forward/backward, and sideways shifts resulting in wave-like spiraling (*Bo Lang*, 波浪), and spring-like oscillating (*Zhen Dong*, 震动) movements.

诀曰：与地心争力。

诀曰：重力位能向重力动能之转化。

诀曰:松以蓄劲,紧以发力,松紧紧松无波不浪。

You may harness these movements and their interaction with gravitational acceleration to convert potential energy into kinetic energy, to convert the change of momentum into usable striking force. Use the up/down motion of your center with gravitational acceleration to increase force/acceleration. As you step, use this up/down gravitational wave motion (*Zhong Li Bo*, 重力波) to induce lateral wave (*Dang Chu Heng Bo*, 荡出横波) and force as well as forward wave (*Zong Bo*, 纵波) and force. You may generate additional power by using forward momentum from stepping.

**Example (*Hun Yuan Zhuang Fa Li*, 浑元桩发力):** Let us consider a forward power discharge/release with a forward shuffling step. Push off your rear foot as you shuffle your lead foot forward. Visualize your torso as a hammer driving your forearms (*Lang Tou Kao Da*, 榔头拷打), stretching the imaginary springs between your head and rear foot. Convert your forward momentum into forward force by *drilling* (*Tui Si Zuan*, 腿似钻) downward and backward with your lead foot to change momentum to produce force. Visualize squeezing the imaginary balloon between your knees while twisting your knees slightly inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋).

**Focus (*Jin Yi Fa Li*, 紧以发力):** Your level of “mental excitement” controls the rate of your neuromuscular relaxation-tension-relaxation exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) of your hard or tensed *Fa Li* focus cycle. The intensity and rate of exchange of this cycle directly affects your power delivery. Practice to increase the intensity from very relaxed to very tensed (齿欲断金) and to decrease the “*period*” (time interval) of the contraction/extension cycle.

诀曰:回以蓄劲,伸以发力,回伸须致用,遍体似弹簧。

诀曰:力之爆发皆在一瞬间。

诀曰:松以蓄劲,紧以发力,松紧紧松无波不浪。

诀曰:松紧紧松互为根。

As your blow connects, suddenly (*Tu Ran Yi Jin*, 突然一紧), momentarily tense your entire body to increase *mass* (M), and maximize your *acceleration* (A) through your target (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发). This will maximize the *force* ( $F=MA$ ) transferred to your target. Immediately, after penetrating your target, relax and return to your on-guard posture to be ready for follow-ups (*Yi Fa Ji Zhi*, 一发即止). Do not remain tensed to admire your work; do not keep arms extended for your opponent to use. (See section on Quality and Focus.)

**Augmentation from breathing musculature (*Ge Mo Dong Li*, 膈膜动力):** Use grunting (*Shi Sheng*, 试声) and reverse breathing to bring in the breathing musculature (*Hu Xi Tan Li*, 呼吸

弹力), to marshal the entire body into concerted action, to augment your whole-body focus and compensate for deficiencies.

诀曰:头撞,脚踩,手发。

诀曰:声力并发。

诀曰:横膈膜一发紧即错误。

诀曰:用短促的试声,使气贯小腹,发力时小腹实圆。

In a proper power discharge/release, simultaneous action is absolutely required; hands, head, feet, force, and grunting must “*arrive simultaneously*” (**Sheng Li Bing Fa**, 声力并发; see Chapter 4: Grunting). It is wrong to tense your diaphragm; use short grunting (**Duan Cu Shi Sheng**, 短促试声) enunciation/vibration (**Gu Dang**, 鼓荡) coordinated with the technique of reverse breathing to guide your **Qi** (气) to your lower abdomen (气贯小腹), to stimulate the musculature of the abdomen, to synthesize the body, chest, waist, and back into immediate concerted action to promote a sudden, crisp, explosive discharge of force.

诀曰:回以蓄劲。

诀曰:曲蓄部位产生阻止变形之弹性力,即爆发之为炸力。

诀曰:习之若恒久,不期自然至。

Other aspects of power discharge/release, involving the interaction with your opponent’s applied forces (**Dui Fang Zhi Zuo Yong Li**, 对方之作用力) and mentally visualized frictional forces (**Jia Jie Zhi Yu Zhou Li**, 假借之宇宙力), etc., can be handled only by subconscious perception, adaptation, and kinesthetic experience from prolong training and conditioning. Note, all these elements are inseparable and are present concurrently in a power discharge/release.

We have touched on the various internal and external elements relevant to force and power; in the following, we will explore in depth some topics essential to the execution of the *explosive* pushing power discharge/release.

## Two Categories of Power Discharge/Release (**Fa Li**, 发力)

Most movements are initiated from a circular hip thrust or body pivot, (**Yi Dong Quan Shen Zhuan**, 一动全身转) and balanced radiation of isometric-opposing-forces from your center (**Gong Zheng Yi Zhong**, 共争一中). The waist or the full body pivot, the entire weight of the body behind an attack, the appropriate neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange (contraction-extension) of internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (**Tan Li**, 全身相争之弹力), and the focusing of your breathing musculature (**Gu Dang**, 鼓荡) with grunting, all influence your strike/thrust. You can increase the power in an action by:

1. Speeding up your weight shift and waist or full body pivot,
2. Coordinating more muscle groups into play concurrently (involving more isometric-opposing-force-pairs) while minimizing the interference from antagonistic muscles,
3. Raising the level of nervous excitation and mental coordination to speed up the neuromuscular contraction/extension cycle (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) (tensed focus),
4. Augmenting your focus with properly timed grunting (reverse breathing) to marshal your core breathing musculature (*Gu Dang*, 鼓荡) into immediate concerted action to compensate for deficiencies.

Yiquan uses mind-body feedback training (NLP) to first evoke the relaxation response, to achieve a very relaxed spring-like whole-body harmony unity (*Jing Zhong Qiu Song*, 静中求松); then to seek the balanced-force with relaxation/tension exchange with *motionless-movement*; and finally to achieve whole-body coordination and harmony of action and force with trial-and-feel exercises (*Song Zhong Qiu Zheng*, 松中求整).

诀曰: 松多紧少。

诀曰: 松而不懈, 紧而不僵。

During training and conditioning, most of the time you are relaxed but not limped or physically lax (*Song Er Bu Xie*, 松而不懈); you are tensed only at the moment of *hard focusing* (*Jin Er Bu Jiang*, 紧而不僵) of your power discharge/release. Remember to let your blows slip out loosely with *comfortable natural ease* as if nothing critical is happening (*Li Ying Song Zheng*, 力应松整); don't tighten up the arms at the beginning of the stroke. The muscular contraction for *hard focusing* only comes just as the blow connects (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发).

诀曰: 力之爆发皆在一瞬间。

Even when you are *hard focusing* (tensing), you must never be rigid or stiff (*Jin Er Bu Jiang*, 紧而不僵). Concentrate to focus your power into your attack by tensing all body muscles at the moment you strike through the target. All blows must terminate with a *snap* several inches behind your target. This tensing or focusing is instantaneous and momentary. Immediately after tensing, you must return to your relaxed whole-body harmony state and your on-guard position. Yiquan requires delivering blows with crisp sudden instantaneous bursts of explosive power, “*exploding*” on contact (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发), relax and withdraw immediately after the explosive power release as if you have touched a red-hot iron plate (*Yi Fa Ji Zhi*, 一发即止). Be ready for follow-



up blows. Do not admire your work and leave your limbs extended for your opponent to use against you.

While there are numerous categories of power discharge/release, let's explore the following two:

**Hitting (punches and strikes) (*Da*, 打; *Ji*, 击):** Here you use your whole-body force on a local area target of your opponent. The energy is concentrated and suddenly released onto your target with impact, using the shortest distance and the shortest time interval to penetrate your target from the front to the back. Your body is always in balance; the feet are always under the body, taking up power from the ground through your legs, waist, and back, by *drilling* your legs into the ground. Power comes mainly from the quick snap of a waist twist or a full body pivot primarily over the rear leg while shifting the weight from one leg to the other. The hips are relaxed and free to swing, and the shoulders are loose and are turned through the central line of the body concurrently with the extension of the arm. The stroke should accelerate and terminate with a snap several inches behind your target. Hitting will damage the target with very little external movement of the target. To a large extent, fast acceleration equals hitting power. If you tighten up, you lose flexibility and timing; keep relaxed. You should clench your fist for focus only when the punch lands.

**Explosive Pushing (*Tui*, 推; *Fang*, 放):** Here you use your whole-body force on your opponent's whole-body. When you deliver power onto your target with increased (larger) movement, increased contact surface area, and increased contact time interval, you will decrease the damage to your target, and increase its external movement. Major part of the explosive pushing power comes from pushing off your rear foot and shifting of your weight, not from a pivot of the waist or the body. You must initiate your explosive pushing power release as soon as your hands contact your opponent. You must have acceleration; increase the rate of momentum change (transfer) during the contact so your explosive push changes your opponent's position sharply. Finish your push as quickly as possible and return to your on-guard position. If your center of gravity moves beyond your *base* during the explosive push (e.g., your pushing hands may extend beyond your front foot toe, *Li Chu Jian*, 力出尖), you must be able to "chase" it and keep it under control. We use this type of explosive pushing power release in push-hands exercises in place of hitting to minimize injuries between practicing partners.

Both categories may have all of the following qualities:

- a. **Fast retract:** Strike/push through your target and immediately snap back to your on-guard position for follow up. Bring your hand back as fast as you thrust it out. Fast release and fast retract makes it difficult to counter.
- b. **Swing/push through:** The strike/push does not stop at the point of impact or contact; instead rely on large momentum and/or acceleration to swing/push through your target, following its path to the backside.

- c. **Strike/push with direction change in midstream:** On contact, *feel*, and *sense* your opponent's resisting force. Then, move your body and arm in synch to change the direction of your striking force using spiral/helical force (*Luo Xuan Li*, 螺旋力). Change and adapt according to your opponent's reaction. The ability to change direction in midstream is genius (*agility*).

诀曰:不期自然至,变化形无形,周旋意无意。

Oral Tradition: With sufficient appropriate diligent practice, you will perform the proper maneuvers at the proper time spontaneously without being aware of your actions; you will be versatile and flexible, adapting to changes with no form; you will be able to maneuver *un*-consciously with no thought and no effort and change your tactics with no conscious mind-intent.

诀曰:因敌变化示神奇。

Oral Tradition: The ability to sense, adapt and change according to your opponent (*agility*) is genius.

NOTES: Except when learning (nursing/nurturing your partner), never strike/push and leave your striking limb extended in any position for your opponent to attack it. Start and finish your strike combination in your on-guard posture. After an attack, always return to your on-guard position immediately. When using combinations, making your last strike with your lead hand allows you to return to your on-guard position quickly. Use your opponent's guard (arms) against him; do not let him use your guard (arms) against you. Correct judgment of timing, angles, and distance interval can only be acquired through push-hands and sparring with opponents.

In general, power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力) with your hands may use any one of three possible relationships between weight shift and hand motion:

1. The shifting of body weight and hand motion move forward concurrently in the same direction. Here your body and hands are synchronized as in an explosive forward push or rear hand straight punch.
2. The shifting of body weight and hand motion move in opposite directions. Here you use internal opposing-force-pairs and body/waist pivot to provide the dominant elastic spring-like power e.g., fixed-step lead hand punches.

诀曰:缩身长手,力由脊发。

Oral Tradition: During your power release, extend your arms while withdrawing your body.

3. Body and hands are synchronized when you start the power release. When your hands contact your target, your body stops and your lower back moves very slightly backwards while the hands are still propelled forward by bringing in the internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs to add to the release of power (visualize stretching the imaginary springs between your hands and your neck, between your head and your feet, etc.). Because of the difference of mass, the “core” body (typically the torso/waist/hip) need only move “*whip-like*” very slightly backwards (oscillating, *Zhen Dong*, 震动). Example: forward stepping lead hand punches, single lead hand forward push.

This exploration of body movement is simplistic, incomplete, and inadequate but will serve to induce you to think and experiment for yourself, to study the path-of-force-propagation (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路). It is important to point out that all your hand/leg movements should be lead by your head movements and driven by your whole-body (core/torso) movements.

诀曰: 节节贯通, 全身及根节之力前摧, 中节待转, 梢节直刺。

Oral Tradition: Use your harmonized connected whole-body to drive your shoulder, your shoulder to drive your forearm, twisting your forearm on contact to deliver straight (linear) power with curved form.

Always move your arms and legs as part of your whole-body, never independently (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动). The magnitudes of the hand movements are usually bigger than that of the head and body. Power should come from a synthesized combination of actions: body movements using gravity and wave-like momentum-change converting potential energy to kinetic energy (重力波转化重力位能为重力动能), spring-like muscular contraction/extension induced by internal/external isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Zheng Li*, 争力), oscillation (*Zhen Dong*, 震动), sway and swing (*Dong Dang*, 动荡), flexing of joints (*Zuan Fan*, 钻翻), and pivoting (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋). Simultaneously, grunting (*Gu Dan*, 鼓荡) is used to supplement and augment your whole-body focus, compensate for deficiencies to deliver maximum power (*Sheng Li Bing Fa*, 声力并发).

NOTES: Feel, experience, explore, and study the relationship between weight shift and hand movement; seek/explore/cultivate/nurture the “path-of-force-propagation” (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路); extrapolate to different techniques. Keep relaxed at all times except when tensed (hard) focusing (*Jin De Fa Li*, 紧的发力). Observe and learn from your experience (*Ti Ren*, 体认) and from others. Do push-hands and sparring to consolidate your *Fa Li* (发力) techniques.

## Basic Skills: The “*Explosive*” Pushing *Fa Li* (*Tui*, 推; *Fang*, 放)

Your power comes from your whole-body (*Zheng Ti*, 整体): your legs, your middle (torso/core) as well as from your internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争) induced by neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange. Begin your power release practice with fixed-step (*Ding Bu*, 定步) relaxed (soft ) power release (*Song De Fa Li*, 松的发力) without tensed focusing and without enunciation of sound (grunting). When you have mastered the proper body mechanics (harmony of whole-body action), then add focusing and grunting/breathing (*Sheng Li Bing Fa*, 声力并发) as well as free-step (*Huo Bu*, 活步).

### A. Fixed-Step Forward Power Release (*Xiang Qian Fa Li*, 向前发力)

Stand in the small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang Fa Li*, 浑元桩发力); close your hands to form loose fists (as if holding eggs); palms facing your chest. Visualize your upper arms (the section from your shoulder to your elbow) do not exist; visualize your forearms (the section from your elbow to your wrist) as big nails. This will relax your shoulders. Keep your mind calm and undisturbed, feel as if nothing critical is happening.

诀曰:欲往前发则先后争。

**Store Power (Preparation):** Mentally position your body to store power by *aligning* and *connecting* your body elements to best *transmit the ground* to your hands, to take up power from the ground. Visualize “*loading*” (*Xu*, 蓄) and coiling your lower back (relax and mentally bowing your back but this mentally induced action should not be physically visible) and *load* your torso/core muscles (relax your breathing musculature, using reverse breathing, inhale while holding your stomach in). Visualize twisting (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) and opening your knees (again must not be physically visible), stretching the imaginary springs between your front knee and rear knee, and between front knee and rear hip (*Xiang Lian Xiang Zheng*, 相连相争). Mentally, stretch the imaginary springs connecting your body to a wall in front of you (*Shen Wai Zheng Li*, 身外争力).

**Release Power (Execution):** Visualize wet sand is sticking to your hands. Push off your rear leg, (*drill* it inwards into the ground stretching the imaginary spring between your rear foot and your head; *Ji*, 挤); shift your body forward, mild opposing the forward motion by *drilling* inwards with your front leg (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋); concurrently opening all your joints, straightening your ankles, knees, hips and torso (uncoil your back but this action should not be visible), add arm swings, forearm inward twists (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), culminating in wrists snaps. As your weight shifts forward, *drill* your front foot into the ground stretching the imaginary springs between your front foot and your head, and compressing the imaginary springs between your knees (*Shuang Tui Nei Jia*, 双腿内夹) and between your front knee and your

rear hip (squeeze the imaginary balloon between the knees, *Xiang Lian Xiang Zheng*, 相连相争); keep your front knee stationary, shin normal (perpendicular) to the ground, do not move your front knee ahead of your front foot toe.

诀曰: 双腿内夹, 力从足生, 全身力一。

Oral Tradition: Squeeze the imaginary balloon between your knees; take up power from the ground; merge your all force components as one.

Visualize your whole body as a big hammer “*suddenly*” driving your forearms forward (*Lang Tou Kao Da*, 榔头拷打). Simultaneously, extend your elbows, twist your forearms and snap your hands open with your palms facing forward (stretching the imaginary springs between your wrists and the imaginary springs between your wrists and your neck) as if to flick the wet sand on your hands as far forward as possible. Push forward, upward, and inward.

诀曰: 发力时小腹实圆。

诀曰: 声力并发。

**Focus:** At the intended target point, snap your hands open like flicking the wet sand particles off your hands as far forward as you can. Your focused explosive push should terminate with a snap several inches behind your intended target. Augment your focus naturally by exhaling rapidly (reverse breathing, grunting), pushing your stomach down and out while momentarily tensing your entire body.

**Re-Set:** Immediately relax your entire body. Withdraw your hands as if you have touched a red-hot iron plate. Snap back, reversing your forearm twists, to your small-step on-guard position; get ready for the next follow-up power release cycle. Pull your hands backward, downward, and outward.

NOTES: Simultaneous/synchronized action is important (头撞, 脚踩, 手发). Hands, feet, and head must “*arrive simultaneously*”.

1. 诀曰: 手脚齐到法为真。  
诀曰: 蓄, 弹, 惊, 炸。

Before the execution of the power release, stay completely relaxed. Any muscular tension will decrease your speed. Keep your mind calm and undisturbed, you should feel as if nothing critical is happening.

2. Visualize your target as a red-hot iron plate. After you release power onto your target, snap your hands back so that your hands will not get burned. Release

power “suddenly” (突然发力) and “explosively” (惊炸) on contact (一触即发); start and finish your power release as fast as you can (一发即止).

3. For proper power discharge/release, you must:
  - a. Make sure your rear hip pushes slightly forward and downward (*Tu*, 吐; *Ji*, 挤), keep your front knee stationary while compressing the imaginary spring between your knees. Turn your knees (*drill*, *Zuan*, 钻, *Jia*, 夹) inward slightly (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋).
  - b. Step down hard with your front foot with a slight inward twist and immediately relax and lift your foot stretching the imaginary spring between your front foot and your head. Keep your front knee stationary and shin normal (perpendicular) to the ground as if braced from all sides.
  - c. Your weight shifts forward to 70% on your front leg, 30% on your rear leg. After releasing, immediately bounce back to the rear-weighted small-step posture in a “*whip-like*” oscillation (*Zhen Dong*, 震动).
4. 诀曰：进头进手需进身。

When using your body to drive your elbows forward, your forehead drives up and forward slightly, straightening your back, stretching the imaginary spring between your rear foot and your head.
5. When your hands reach your target, twist them apart slightly as if breaking strings binding your forearms together, stretching the imaginary spring between your wrists. Snap your hands through your target but do not straighten or lock your elbows (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直); the shock of snapping your elbows into locking positions will damage your joints.
6. 诀曰：力透敌背。

Do not look down; always look in the direction of your power discharge/release. Always mentally point your mind-intent (focused concentration) through the back of your target.
7. 诀曰：遍体似弹簧。

Maintain your spring-like whole-body harmony; every element of your entire body should be like a compressed coiled spring, ready to release power repeatedly. Do not put too much weight on your heels, maintain “*spring*” in your

legs; keep all your joints mildly extended and bent so the “*whip-like*” action necessary for explosive power discharge/release may be repeated.

You must be able to discharge/release power while moving with free-step (*Huo Bu Fa Li*, 活步发力). Fixed-step power discharge/release exercises and footwork exercises form the foundation. Practice power discharge/release while moving forward, backward, and turning. Use your imagination and crisis rehearsal to create realistic exercises.

### Examples:

In these examples, use the momentum change of the forward stepping to add power.

诀曰:进头进手需进身,手脚齐到法为真。

**Forward-Step (Shuffle Step):** Visualize facing your opponent in the left-lead small-step posture. Use the forward shuffle step, push off your rear right foot and step forward with your left foot while executing a forward power discharge/release. The hand, the leading left foot, and the head must *arrive simultaneously*. Use small shuffle steps.

诀曰:步踏中门钻入重心夺敌位,即是神手亦难防。

**Side-Step/Forward-Step:** At the appropriate moment, initiate change: step laterally to your right side with your right foot; your opponent will have to adjust his posture to face you again. Before he can complete his adjustment, step your left foot forward into his center gate (*Zhong Men*, 中门) and execute forward power discharge/release.

**Backward-Step/Forward-Step (Lead Leg Replacement):** Face your opponent with left-lead small-step posture. If he comes in with a frontal forward attack, withdraw your leading left foot towards your rear right leg. But before your opponent can plant his advance foot, step forward again with your left foot to occupy his center gate (*Zhong Men*, 中门) and execute forward power discharge/release. This is the essence of half-step forward straight punch (*Ban Bu Beng Quan*, 半步崩拳).

### B. Fixed-Step Downward/Backward Power Release (*Xiang Hou Xia Fa Li*, 向后下发力)

Start your downward/backward power discharge/release from the *Hook/hang* small-step posture (*Gou Gua Zhuang*, 勾挂桩), with your lead hand at mouth level, palms facing each other.

诀曰:欲往后发则力向前争。欲往上则先下,欲下则先上。

Visualize that you have a pulley attached to the ceiling; one end of the rope passing through this pulley is attached to a heavy weight; hold the other end of the rope lightly with your hands. From a completely relaxed whole-body harmony state; push off with your front foot with invisible outward *drilling* (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) to rapidly shift your weight backward (*Tun*, 吞) and downward (*Chen*, 沉) stretching the imaginary springs between your front foot and your head and between your front knee and your rear hip (*Xiang Lian Xiang Zheng*, 相连相争). *Drilling* your rear knee outward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), move your hips backward and downward (compressing the imaginary spring from your butt to the ground) without compromising your postural integrity (*Xing Bu Ke San*, 形不可散), and simultaneously snap your hands downward with inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), focusing your strike downward, backward, and slightly outward. It helps to visualize tensing and squeezing an imaginary balloon between your chin and your neck while pushing slightly upward at the top of your head. Visualize using your whole-body to pull up the imaginary heavy weight. After momentarily tensing your entire body, immediately relax completely and return to your relaxed spring-like whole-body harmony state, to your on-guard posture.

In certain respects, this process is essentially a transition from the *Hook/hang* small-step posture (*Gou Gua Zhuang*, 勾挂桩) to the large-step posture (*Tame-the-tiger*, *Fu Hu Zhuang*, 伏虎桩) and return to the small-step posture. Beginners may terminate this downward and backward power discharge/release exercise at the large-step posture. Be very careful here, your *frame/posture* must not disintegrate (*Xing Bu Ke San*, 形不可散). As you improve, attempt to bounce back to the small-step posture quickly by *drilling* legs inward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) and squeezing the imaginary spring between your knees. Alternatively, you may practice returning to the *Hook/hang* posture by letting the imaginary weight down slowly and gently.

NOTES: Do not shift your weight too far backward and/or downward because that will destroy your whole-body harmony/integrity (*Xing San*, 形散). Your center of gravity must remain within the middle 1/3 of your base.

### Example:

**Side-Step Backward/downward Power Release:** Face your opponent with left-lead small-step posture. Step with your right rear foot backwards and/or to you side. Shift your body from high small-step posture to low large-step posture and execute downward/backward power release.



### C. Fixed-Step Lateral (Left/Right) Power Release (*Xiang Heng Fa Li*, 向横发力)

Start with the right (left) lead small-step posture, palms facing downwards.

诀曰: 欲左应向右, 欲右应向左, 利用全身相争之弹力, 突然发力。

To practice power release to your left (right), mentally visualize leaning your whole-body to your right (left) onto a large strong imaginary spring; feel the strong resistance of the compressed spring (*Xu*, 蓄). As a beginner, you may show external movement to your right (left) but you should internalize (minimize) this movement, hiding your intention from your opponent.

When you reach the point of release; the imaginary compressed spring pushes you suddenly, explosively, to your left (right). Simultaneously, *drill* your right (left) leg inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), twisting your right (left) heel outwards and pivoting your body to your left (right):

1. Twisting your right (left) forearm from palm facing down to palm facing left (right), snap your right hand to your left like throwing a ball to your left (right).
2. Twist your left (right) forearm to palm facing left (right) and snap it to your left (right). Keep your left hand and forearm high, pull it backward, outward, and upward.
3. Rotate your head to your left (right). Look in the direction of the power release. This will increase the intensity of the relaxation/tension exchange.
4. Push off with your rear leg; *drill* inward with your front leg, pivoting on your lead foot turning the heel outward. Be sure to pivot your waist and/or your whole-body (both feet must pivot in unison, in synch, *Xiang Lian Xiang Zheng*, 相连相争).

诀曰: 夹腿抖腰, 力从足生, 多面螺旋。

Oral Tradition: Squeeze the imaginary balloon between your knees; pivot your waist; take up power from the ground; coordinate rotation of all body elements.

诀曰: 腰似车轮腿似钻。

Oral Tradition: Waist turns like wheel, legs turn like drills.

NOTES: Lateral power discharge/release to your right from a right-lead requires pivoting your whole-body on an axis from your rear foot to your head over your lead leg. The body mechanics

is similar to the rear hand straight punch. Practice the lateral power discharge/release from the parallel-step (*Cheng Bao Zhuang*, 撑抱桩) to reinforce/experience your optimal body alignment, connected-ness, full-body pivot and ground path. Explore single hand *Bo Shui Shi Li* (拨水试力) to study the path-of-force-propagation (*Jing Lu*, 劲路) for forward and lateral palm heel strikes (*Zhang Fa*, 掌法).

### Example:

**Circular-Step Lateral Fa Li:** Face your opponent with the left-lead small-step posture. Step forward with your left foot; turning your left foot inwards and wheel your body to your right (rotate your body clockwise); look to your right in the direction of your intended power release. Bring your right foot close to your left foot then step your right foot to your right in a circular path. When you plant your right foot, execute a lateral power release to your right.

## D. Single-Hand Explosive Pushing Power Discharge/Release

From the left-lead small-step posture with palms facing inward, visualize your whole body as a hammer and your left forearm as a nail. Completely relax your shoulder and upper arm. Push off your right leg (*drill* inwards and take up power from the ground); shift your body weight forward onto your left leg. Pivot on the ball of your left foot, *drill* left leg inwards and turn your left heel out, torque your torso a quarter turn to the right, thrust your left shoulder forward, shooting your left forearm loosely forward with comfortable natural ease.

NOTES: Shifting your weight from one leg to the other and a full-body pivot on an axis from your lead foot to your head are used to power the explosive push. The lead side of the body anchors the pivot point. In fixed-step practice, the front knee should remain relatively stationary (it may twist/*drill*); keep front shin normal (perpendicular) to the ground as if braced from all sides, the front knee must never move ahead of your front toe.

诀曰：夹腿抖腰，力从足生，多面螺旋。

Oral Tradition: Squeeze the imaginary balloon between your knees; pivot your waist and body; take up power from the ground; coordinate rotations of various body elements.

Simultaneously, as you shoot out your left arm, twist your left forearm inwards “on contact”, snap your palm to facing forward, pull your right hand backward, upward, and outward as if breaking a string between your wrists (isometric-opposing-force-pair, *Zheng Li*, 争力), keep your rear hand up. Coordinate your body to move as a harmonized whole-body, push your front knee forward and your rear hip slightly backward (isometric-opposing-force-pair, *Xiang Lian*

**Xiang Zheng**, 相连相争) shifting your weight to 70% front 30% back; push your forehead slightly forward and upward (up/down isometric-opposing-force-pair); look at your intended target; keep your chin tucked-in. The head, the left hand, and the left foot must *arrive simultaneously* (**Tou Zhuang**, 头撞, **Jiao Cai**, 脚踩, **Shou Fa**, 手发).

诀曰: 节节贯通, 全身及根节之力前摧, 中节待转, 梢节直刺。

Oral Tradition: Use your harmonized whole-body to drive your shoulder, your shoulder to drive your forearm, twisting your forearm on contact to deliver straight (linear) power with curved form.

NOTES: The body mechanics is similar to the lead-hand straight punch but the forward shifting of your weight is much more pronounced. See “Chapter 8: Fighting” for more examples of **Fa Li** (发力) with **San Shou** (散手) techniques.

## Training Guideline - Summary

You should practice power discharge/release (**Fa Li**, 发力) with all your practical maneuvers/techniques (**San Shou**, 散手) using different parts of your body. (See Chapter 8: Fighting.) The goal is to be able to deliver power from any contact point or striking impact point with thrusting/punching and swinging/striking maneuvers using large as well as small movements at will (**Sui Shi Fa Li**, 随时发力).

诀曰: 拳打丈外不为远, 近者只在一寸中。

Oral Tradition: Your strikes should be felt before it is seen. Long punches may cover more than ten feet but short ones may be delivered within an inch.

Explore, experiment, and learn from experience; take each one to the extreme and study its opposites. Since each strike is most effective only within its “*focus zone*”, the general rules of defense are:

1. Jam or smother a blow in its “*initiate zone*” before it attains optimal speed; attack you opponent in his preparation (**Du Da**, 堵打),
2. Pass a fully developed blow in its “*strike focus zone*” (**Shan Da**, 闪打), and
3. Parry or fend-off a blow at its “*end of the run zone*” with small sharp motion (**Jie Da**, 截打).

Evading an attack while remaining in range to counter-attack is a superior and preferred defensive tactic (See Chapter 4: Footwork). Use *zoning*, rush your opponent, get inside his *zone* and you would have *disarmed* his weapons (whether they are hands, feet, elbows, shoulders, head, or stick). Get in close and stay close is a good fighting tactic.

Before practicing power discharge/release with a maneuver/technique, you must put it through *Shi Li* (试力) training procedures to ingrain and harmonize the action. Power discharge/release training and conditioning should begin with soft (*Fang Song*, 放松) relaxed power release, with no hard (*Jin*, 紧) tensed focus state to explore the path-of-force-propagation (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路). When you have achieved whole-body coordination, harmony of action, then practice (hard) tensed focus power release complimented by the use of grunting (reverse breathing) to augment your focus, to compensate for deficiencies. Do not practice only (hard) tensed focus exclusively, that will lead to rigidity and stiffness.

诀曰：松多紧少。

Practicing soft relaxed power releases intersperse with a few hard tensed focus ones seem to provide the most effective training; the majority of your practice should be soft and relaxed.

The following training and conditioning sequence is only a guideline; change, and refine as you feel inclined:

1. **Relaxed** (soft or *Song*, 松) **Power Discharge/Release:** Practice the power discharge/release motion of each maneuver/technique without tensed focusing. Stay relaxed but coordinate and pattern your body to move as an integrated, harmonized whole-body (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动). Practice with this method prior to practicing with focus to explore the path-of-force-propagation (*Zhao Jing*, 找劲) of each maneuver/technique.
2. **Focused** (hard or tensed, *Jin*, 紧) **Power Discharge/Release:** Practice the power discharge/release motion and focus your power. Tense your muscles momentarily at the delivery and immediately relax after focusing. Keep your body in the spring-like whole-body harmony state for repeating power release instantaneously. You should incorporate breath control (reverse breathing, grunting) to augment your focus by bring in your breathing musculature to compensate for deficiencies (*Sheng Li Bing Fa*, 声力并发).
3. **Combination:** Mix the above two practice methods. Practice several relaxed (soft) power releases than do a couple of focused (hard) power releases. Making up your workout with short periods of high-speed tensed focus efforts (hard) interspersed with long periods of milder relaxed activity (soft) seems to be the best training/conditioning procedure.

4. **Using a partner as a light resistance:** Practice releasing into a partner (with protective equipment) or a sand bag to get a real *feel* of the resistance. Remember, large number of repetitions with light resistance and large full range motions helps you build strength and speed, while repetitions with heavy resistance tend to build power and endurance.

Practice power release using all your practical maneuvers/techniques with large as well as small magnitude of movement. Start with fixed-step. When you have mastered whole-body harmony of action and force in fixed-step, move onto free-step. Remember to discharge/release your balanced-force suddenly and explosively on contact and return immediately to your on-guard position. The goal is to be able to discharge/release power at any moment (*Sui Shi Fa Li*, 随时发力) spontaneously.

## Common Errors

This is so important that we will repeat it again: Students must practice power discharge/release with proper guidance because bad habits, once ingrained, are very troublesome to correct and fix. A good teacher should see your errors, and correct your mistakes before they become habitual. We shall conclude this chapter with a summary of some common causes of ineffective power discharge/release:

1. **Tensed up before and during the power discharge/release.** You must be in your relaxed whole-body harmony state before and after your power release. Keep your mind calm and undisturbed as if nothing critical is happening (若无其事).
2. **Lack of whole-body harmony.** If your whole-body is not synthesized and coordinated, different parts of your body will hinder/interfere with each other (i.e., excessive antagonistic tension). The power release is not from your whole-body effort but is localized, e.g., just from your limbs. Try to achieve whole-body coordination: If one part of your body moves, only move it as part of your whole-body, never independently, your whole-body always moves in unison, every movement involves the coordination of all elements (hands, feet, torso, and mind) of your whole-body.
3. **Lack of speed/acceleration.** If there is no increase in speed/acceleration into the push and the contact time is too long, the power discharge/release will not be a sudden “explosive” burst (*Fa Li Yao Xun Meng*, 发力要迅猛). It becomes a constant speed long push or pull. Try for a clean, crisp, snappy, and sudden explosive burst (*Bao Fa Wei Wai Li*, 爆发为外力).

诀曰：内劲需能爆发为外力始能收到练拳之真实益处。

Oral Tradition: The real benefit of martial arts training is the ability to suddenly “explode” your internal strength (*Nei Jing*, 内劲) as external force (*Wai Li*, 外力).

4. **Lack of balance of internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs.** Power release must use *connected-ness* transmitting the power from the ground (*Yi Guan Zhi Li*, 一贯之力), and isometric-opposing-force-pairs to generate spring-like elastic force (*Tan Li*, 弹力). The vertical isometric-opposing-force-pair (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力) mildly elongating your spine is the most important. Other pairs to consider (相连相争): between front knee and rear hip, between wrists, between wrists and back of neck, between head and feet, etc., (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争).
5. **Failure to take up power from the ground.** *Drill* your leg; push off the ground to shift your weight and to torque your torso in the direction of your strike. Use optimal body *alignment* and *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) to *keep the ground path pure* (keep the path-of-force-propagation clean) conducting/transmitting the ground to your hands.

诀曰:与地心争力。

Oral Tradition: Take up power from the ground.

NOTES: Apply *Shi Li* (试力) and *Fa Li* (发力) training and conditioning to all maneuvers/techniques until skills become spontaneous reflexes: mind and body working in synch and motions flow with no conscious thought or effort.

## Chapter 7: Push-Hands (*Tui Shou*, 推手)

# 推手

Push-hands (*Tui Shou*, 推手) is essential training for combat readiness; it must be built on a firm foundation in relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩), trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力), footwork (*Zou Bu*, 走步), and power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力). An understanding and mastery of using the *ground path* with appropriate “*path-of-force-propagation*” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路), optimal *connected-ness* (*Shu Zhan Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 舒展连通一贯), musculoskeletal *alignment* (*Gu Ge Zhi Cheng*, 骨骼支撑), and the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) is essential; indeed, push-hands without employing “*taking up power from the ground*” with whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Shu Zhan Lian Tong Xie Tiao*, 整体舒展连通协调) and the use of the whole-body balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) is of limited value. Push-hands practice trains you to detect your opponent’s strengths and weaknesses, to determine and change his force directions, and to hinder his attacks. It is the foundation of Yiquan’s basic fighting tactic of “using your opponent’s guard against him” (*Tui Shou Duan Shou Jie He*, 推手断手结合).

The inseparable overlapping objectives of push-hands include:

**Sensitivity training:** Learn to “*listen*” (*Ting*, 听), *feel*, and sense (with your hands and forearms) and observe/perceive/analyze your opponent’s strengths, weaknesses, and force directions. The objective is to “know” and “control” your opponent with minimum force.

**Resistance training:** Use your harmonized whole-body actions against light resistance to ingrain, increase, develop, and cultivate your balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力); learn to use the proper amount of force and appropriate relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) to adapt and change your opponent’s force directions with minimal applied force and small physical movement.

**Techniques training:** Practice execution of maneuvers/techniques to ingrain them to become “habit”, and to become instinctive sub-conscious spontaneous reflexes. Since the actual performance of a maneuver depends on your opponent’s actions, which is unpredictable, you must learn to sense, adapt and change according to your opponent (*Yin Di Bian Hua*, 因敌变化). To be useful, your skills must become spontaneous (automatic) reflexes (*Zi Dong Hua*, 自动化).

**Fight Simulation training:** Cultivate your combat mindset and establish decision-making reference points for your *un*-conscious mind. Learn to hinder your opponent’s actions by using his guard (arms/hands) against him. Disorient your opponent by doing the unexpected; operating at a timing your opponent does not expect, at a quicker and/or different tempo not just moving faster, is the essence of time-based fast transient tactic. Unify your offensive and defensive movement as “one” (*Gong Shou He Yi*, 攻守合一).

These objectives are related and inseparable. Initially, beginners could approach these objectives separately. Each of them could be treated as a separate development phase in push-hands; become proficient at each before attempting to synthesize them in competitive push-hands or use push-hands to “use your opponent’s guard” as “preparation for attacks” in sparring (*Tui Shou San Shou Jie He*, 推手散手结合).

It must be emphasized that push-hands (*Tui Shou*, 推手) is not a substitute for sparring (*San Shou*, 散手), it is a supplement to and a subset of sparring. It is a study of you in action with another person; it is “preparation for attacks”.

诀曰：虚实转移枢纽处，若非久历永不知。

Oral Tradition: Knowing when and where to take the appropriate actions, to sense adapt and change according to your opponent, can only come from real experience obtained from diligent push-hands and sparring practice.

诀曰：若能出手而得已发未发时机之扼要，则非久经实作之惯手难能得也。

Oral Tradition: Push-hands and sparring practice are the most direct paths to gain real fighting experience. Mastery of timing, angle, distance interval, and control of engagement opportunities can only come from prolong diligent push-hands and sparring practice.

In this chapter, we present the principles of push-hands, and describe Yiquan basic skills: Single Hand (*Dan Tui Shou*, 单推手) and Dual Hand or “rolling hands” (*Shuang Tui Shou*, 双推手) push-hands.



## Principles

The effectiveness of a maneuver/technique depends on the reaction of your opponent which is not predictable. Real experience can only be obtained by diligently studying yourself interacting with another person, your opponent. Push-hands (*Tui Shou*, 推手) provides the means for this practice/study without the requirement of protective equipment.

诀曰: ...切 磋 棚 挤 着, ...万 遍 不 失, ...乃 为 成 艺, 后 方 可 随 意 应 敌, 因 敌 制 胜 也。

Push-hands (*Tui Shou*, 推手) and sparring (using body protection; *Shi Zhan*, 实战) must be your “daily bread”; you must practice push-hands every day; winning or losing is not important in training, learning from the experience is.

诀曰: 非 至 於 自 动 运 动 之 境, 不 能 得 力 得 气 得 神 而 入 化 境。

Oral Tradition: To be useful, skills must be internalized as spontaneous reflexes.

诀曰: 牵 制 对 手, 应 机 而 发, 因 势 而 变。

Oral Tradition: Hinder your opponent’s movements/actions to gain moment time; control engagement opportunities; change and adapt according to your opponent.

诀曰: 虚 实 转 移 枢 纽 处, 若 非 久 历 永 不 知。

Oral Tradition: Knowing when and where to take the appropriate actions, to sense adapt and change according to your opponent, can only come from real experience obtained from diligent push-hands and sparring practice.

诀曰: 习 之 若 恒 久, 不 期 自 然 至, 变 化 形 无 形, 周 旋 意 无 意。

Oral Tradition: Repetition is the mother of all skills. You must train to: Perform the proper action at the proper time with no conscious effort and awareness; change maneuvers spontaneously (automatically) without being aware of your action; be versatile, flexible, and form-less; switch tactics as required by the situation sub-consciously with no conscious mind-intent.

Realistic training and conditioning is the key to expertise. Let us begin by examining the on-guard fighting posture and body mechanics.

## Fighting Posture - The On-Guard Stance

The on-guard posture, stance and arms positions, for push-hands training are that of the small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩).

诀曰: 骨骼支撑, 气力均整, 关节灵活, 筋肉收敛而舒展。

All the admonishments for this posture should be observed in your push-hands training but it is especially important to maintain the lateral expansion and contraction (propping-out and hugging-in; *Kai He*, 开合) forces in your arms and the optimal musculoskeletal *alignment* and *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) “to conduct the ground” to the contact points (*Li Dian*, 力点). Use *musculoskeletal support*; relax your musculature. All joints should be slightly bent and not straight (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直).

诀曰: 横撑竖抱, 撑三抱七。

Prop your elbows out. Propping-out (*Heng Cheng*, 横撑) your elbows allows for the more efficient propagation of strength from your torso (core) into the arms and inhibits your opponent's ability to collapse (immobilize) your joints destroying your *frame* (*Jian Jia*, 肩架) integrity. Simultaneously, maintain the hugging-in (*Shu Bao*, 竖抱) force for applying pressure onto your opponent (directing forces at the contact points towards his central line). Keep a sense of fullness in your arms, and indeed, in your entire body. Your lead front hand should be forward of and higher than your rear guard hand. Keep both arms up; not too high or you will invite your opponent to push your arms up and attack under them; not too low otherwise your opponent will push them down and attack over them. Guard your central line; one or both of your arms should point towards and threaten your opponent's central line.

In addition to the isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Zheng Li*, 争力) in the arms (visualize imaginary springs between your wrists and between your wrists and your neck), be sure to employ the other two principle *Zheng Li* (争力) pairs: the up/down isometric-opposing-force pairs mildly elongating your spine (visualize imaginary springs between your feet and your head) and the forward/backward isometric-opposing-force-pairs in the legs and arms (visualize imaginary springs between your knees and between your front knee and rear hip).

诀曰: 松紧之枢纽在于上下, 上下相引为周身互争之法。

Oral Tradition: The key to maintaining proper relaxation and tension in your posture is the up/down (vertical) isometric-opposing-forces mildly elongating your spine. It is the most important *Zheng Li* that contributes to and integrates your whole-body's internal *Zheng Li*.

As previously stated the most important isometric-opposing-force-pair is the up/down pair mildly elongating your spine. Training this pair maximizes the *connected-ness* and coordination between the upper and lower body, thereby effectively allowing the conveyance and propagation of your lower body's strength and momentum to your upper body, “conducting the ground” to the contact points (*Lian Tong*, 连通). The isometric-opposing-forces in the legs, trained by mentally pushing the front knee forward and slightly upward and the rear hip backward and slightly downward, will put “spring” in your legs, condition your ability to advance or to retreat as needed or as desired while teaching you to use the ground as the basis for all movement (*Li Cong Di Qi*, 力从地起). Direct these isometric-opposing-force-pairs with mind-intent (focused concentration with no muscular tension; *Yong Yi Bu Yong Li*, 用意不用力); do not tense up and become rigid and/or stiff (*Jiang*, 僵). Appropriate relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) capability must be maintained to provide for maximum ability to adapt and change according to your opponent.

诀曰：整体松紧运用自如，遍体似弹簧。

Relax appropriately - mentally and physically; do not put too much weight on your heels; keep your whole-body elastic, spring-like. Pay attention to these aspects of the on-guard posture:

**Comfort Zone:** The hands should not cross over your central line nor stray beyond the confines of your shoulders; they should move no higher than the eyebrow or lower than the navel; they should not extend beyond your front foot toes (there are exceptions) and should come no closer than a hand's width to your torso. These parameters for your hand position define your “*comfort zone*”, your area of maximum control.

诀曰：赢人均在曲折之变化。

**Joints (*Guan Jie*, 关节, *Qu Zhe*, 曲折):** Develop a kinesthetic awareness of the positions of your joints and each section of your arms and legs. Actions and changes at the joints contribute significantly to the outcome of an encounter. All joints, from the torso to the hands and legs, should be kept open (between 90 and 180 degrees), elastic like springs, and flexible (*Guan Jie Ling Huo*, 关节灵活). Specifically, never lock your elbow nor bend it excessively. Never *collapse* the space (visualize imaginary balloons) under your arms and/or between your arms.

**Point (*Li Dian*, 力点):** Present a convex surface (with the hand and forearm through the wrist joint) to your opponent's force at the contact points (*Chu Chu Cheng Yuan*, 触处成圆). Constantly change the forces at the forearm contact points by twisting (*Zuan Fan*, 钻翻), rotating (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋), and sliding to change the direction of your opponent's force (*Gai Bian Dui Fang Li Xiang*, 改变对方力向). “*Stick*” (*Zhan Lian Zhan Sui*, 沾粘连随)! Do not disconnect (*Bu Diu Bu Ding*, 不丢不顶) the contact points. Try to use the contact points on your forearms “close to your elbows” for better leverage and to free the hands for attacks.

诀曰:多面螺旋,支点力滚丝。

**Line and Spiral (*Xian*, 线):** Use spiral (helical) motions to deliver balanced-forces on opening lines (*Zuan Fan Luo Xuan*, 钻翻螺旋). The lateral/tangential components of helical spirals divert your opponent's limbs, changing the incoming force direction, while the linear components deliver the linear force for attacking punches and strikes.

**Plane (*Mian*, 面):** Always present changing oblique planes (*Shen Fa Bian Hua*, 身法变化) to your opponent's forces to reduce the normal (perpendicular) component. If your torso is too square to your opponent, his forward momentum may over-power you; too perpendicular, his lateral forces may push you off balance. Keep your torso angled (bladed) to the front and your elbows either lower or higher than your wrists. Do not present your forearm as a horizontal surface at the contact points. Keeping your elbow either slightly higher or lower than your wrist inclines your forearm in positions best suited to dealing with and controlling your opponent's forces. If your opponent catches you flatfooted and completely square, shift your hips back and drop one side, pivot out of the line of the incoming force.

诀曰:正面微转即斜面,斜面迎击正可摧。

**Oral Tradition:** Twist your torso to switch from being squared to being angled (bladed) to your opponent and vice versa. Angled (bladed) posture minimizes your exposure to an attack and put you in good position to defend and to counter while squared facing posture let you use both hands in an all out vicious attack.

**Dimensions:** Do not limit your movement in 2-dimensional planes; make use of the entire 3-dimensional space by changing movement lines onto various intersecting planes. Fighting (*Shi Zhan*, 实战) and push-hands (*Tui Shou*, 推手) are “time-based” hand-to-hand combat in the entire “Mind-Time-Space” continuum.

## Body Mechanics

Integration of your mind-body into a harmonized whole-body state (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调) is achieved with relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) using visualization and *motionless-movement* (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动) practice. Whole-body neuromuscular coordination, harmony of action and force, is developed with trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercises: when any one part of your body moves, it must be moved only as part of your whole-body, never independently, your hands, feet, torso, and mind all move in unison (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动; *Yi Dong Quan Shen Zhuan*, 一动全身转). The greatest power you can manifest will be generated using this integrated whole-body harmony method *taking up power from the*

ground (*Li Cong Di Qi*, 力从地起) and it is the fundamental body mechanics for all movements in Yiquan, for merging all force components as “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一).

诀曰: 节节贯通, 全身及根节之力前摧, 中节待转, 梢节直刺。

Oral Tradition: Keep the path-of-force-propagation clean. Use your harmonized whole-body to drive your shoulder, your shoulder to drive your forearm. Twist your forearms in contact with your opponent to deflect your opponent's forces while delivering straight (linear) power (with curved form) with your hands.

诀曰: 攻守合一。

Oral Tradition: Synthesize offense and defense.

Correct posture and *frame* (*Jian Jia*, 肩架) allied with whole-body neuromuscular coordination enable you to unify and harmonize your offensive/defensive movements as “one”, and to release power at will (*Sui Shi Fa Li*, 随时发力).

In push-hands practice, most of the time, your entire body should be relaxed (*Song Duo Jin Shao*, 松多紧少); focus and tense only at the moment of a power release (explosive push).

诀曰: 松紧紧松勿过正, 虚实实虚得中平。

Obviously, during movement, there is neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange and one begets the other. However, tensed muscles are an impediment to efficient movement; tension yields motion that tends to be jerky, and even slow. As you relax appropriately (mental attitude and physically), you will move more smoothly with less effort and greater speed. Do not confuse jerky, fast movement with real speed. Smoothness and the elimination of all extraneous motion in the execution of a technique are the keys to real speed; underpinning those keys is appropriate relaxation and tension. There is relaxation within tension and tension within relaxation.

诀曰: 不觉力之力。

At the moment of a power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力), your force must be balanced. It will have a primary direction but it must not have an absolute direction. Whatever part of the body is delivering the force to your target, it must be balanced with some other part or parts of the body moving in other directions such that you maintain your *centered-ness* (*Zhong*, 中), *level-ness* (*Ping*, 平) and equilibrium (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争), and the discharge must be *effortless*. During *Fa Li* (发力), your mind and body must work in synch; actions and forces must flow with no conscious effort. If you feel strength inside your body, you are probably doing something wrong; you must “*explode*” your internal strength as external force (*Ba Li Da Dao Shen Wai*, 把力打到身外).

Employ the natural windings of the body to produce helical spiral motion (*Duo Mian Luo Xuan*, 多面螺旋) in all your movement (*Yi Dong Quan Shen Zhuan*, 一动全身转).

诀曰: 出手如钢锉, 回手似钩杆。

When advancing or retreating, let your core/torso and limbs (forearms/legs) spiral or twist/*drill* naturally along respective axis according to the muscle layering (e.g., rise is *drill*, 起是钻, fall is *overturn*, 落是翻). This will keep the contact points non-static and thus inhibit your opponent's ability to recognize or control the forces you employ as well as help propagate force between your torso and the contact points.

诀曰: 腰似车轮腿似钻。

Oral Tradition: Waist turns like a wheel; legs twist like drills.

As you *deliver* force (from the ground to the contact points) or *receive* force (from the contact points to the ground) allow your waist/torso to pivot, to turn with the transmission of that force. Also make use of spiraling *drilling* (*Zuan*, 钻) with the legs, particularly in the delivery of force. Twist the legs slightly, as if *drilling* them into the ground, to impart a rotational aspect to your movement (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋). Doing so will add to the overall quality and quantity of your explosive power discharge/release.

诀曰: 两足重量, 前四后六, 用时颠倒互换。

In push-hands practice, you may shift your weight towards the balls of your feet (feel the ground with the balls of both feet); keep your heels touching the ground lightly; do not put much weight on your heels to put “spring” in your legs; keep your whole-body elastic like springs. Within the movement of a push-hands pattern, your body should be predominantly weighted towards your rear leg (70%) but may shift between a 70/30 split to a 60/40 split.

诀曰: 两足重量三七互换。

Use whole-body momentum; when releasing power to the front, your body weight should shift from back to front (70/30 to 30/70) then reset back to the original posture - weighted towards your rear leg. In all cases, your center of gravity must be maintained inside the middle 1/3 of the base of support formed by your feet (the length from your rear foot heel to your forward foot toes), your front shin must remain normal (perpendicular) to the ground as if braced from all sides, and your front knee must be kept relatively stationary. All joints should be between 90 and 180 degrees (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直).

诀曰: 脚无定位, 身无定势。

NOTES: There are no perfect static/fixed feet positions or body postures. All movement is derived from using the ground. Take up power from the ground. Always maintain a relaxed, resilient *connected-ness* through your body between the points of contact and the ground (*Shu Zhan Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 舒展连通一贯); keep the path-of-force-propagation clean. Relax appropriately! In your initial training, keep your touch light and your motions slow. Slow is smooth; smooth is fast.

While the ultimate goal is to excel in competitive push-hands (*Dui Kang Xing Tui Shou*, 对抗性推手), we must explore the concepts and principles through the following inseparable sequential objectives:

## Sensitivity Training

For beginners, in this phase, the trainer/teacher should lead (*Dai*, 带) while the trainee/student follows by “*sticking*” at the contact points and learns to “*listen*” with his forearms/hands.

诀曰: 沾 连 粘 随, 察 觉 对 方 虚 实, 强 弱 和 力 向。

You must *observe*, perceive, and analyze your opponent’s weaknesses/strengths, force directions, etc., to get a *feel* of the correct distance, angle, and timing; then *orient* yourself to understand, and create engagement opportunities.

You may consider sensitivity push-hands training as trial-and-feel exercise with a partner (*Shuang Ren Shi Li*, 双人试力). It is an exercise in both proactive and reactive movement. You must maintain the correct body *frame* (*Jian Jia*, 肩架) of the small-step posture and *stick* to your partner at the contact points on the forearms. Even as these contact points change slightly within the movement of the push-hands pattern, do not *disconnect* (*Tuo Dian*, 脱点) from your partner (*Bu Dui*, 不丢). Stay appropriately relaxed; avoid any semblance of rigidity or stiffness (*Jiang Hua*, 僵化). Do not resist your partner's force with brute force (*Bu Ding*, 不顶). “*Receive*” your partner’s attacking force and neutralize it by deflecting it and re-directing it, changing its direction. Establish a resilient *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) through your body between the contact points and the ground, and employ this to partially absorb and re-direct your partner's force away from your central line (*Zhong Xian*, 中线). Once an incoming force is thus neutralized, direct your balanced-force through the appropriate “path-of-force-propagation” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路) from the ground to the contact points towards your partner's central line (*Shou Zhong Yong Zhong*, 守中用中). At this phase of push-hands training, exert only *minimal force*. Use only “sufficient force” to maintain whatever movement pattern you are practicing. Let your body be a “*conduit*” transmitting the balanced-force from the ground to the contact points, and vice versa. Focus your attention and concentration on manipulating the “*end points of the ground paths*” (Mike Sigman), i.e., the points of contact.

Learn to use your balanced-force in this interactive setting and *feel* (perceive) how your own balanced-force interacts with your partner's. Pay close attention to timing, directions, angles, interval, contact points, *connected-ness*, *alignment*, and the transmission of the interacting forces. Use harmonized whole-body neuromuscular coordination in all your movement. Keep your hands well up between you and your partner. In re-directing force away from the central line (*Gai Bian Li Xiang*, 改变力向), one hand should always guard the central line, and do not allow your hand(s) to stray beyond the boundary of your shoulders. Keep your arms up (but not too high); do not lower your hands below your navel (i.e., too low). Maintain a constant distance between your torso and that of your partner's with proper footwork. Maintain relaxation of muscles and attitude. Relaxation does not mean not to use force. Indeed there must be neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换); there is relaxation within tension and there is tension within relaxation. With proper relaxation, you can “explode” your internal strength as a very strong focused balanced-force (*Bao Fa Wei Wai Li*, 爆发为外力) by “suddenly” tensing up (*Tu Ran Yi Jin*, 突然一紧). However, keep your touch light; at this phase of your training, it is better to be too light than too heavy.

## Resistance Training

This phase is sensitivity practice with an intensified use of your whole-body balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). “*Light resistance*” training carefully tests the integrity, as well as cultivates your internal musculoskeletal *alignment* (*Gu Ge Zhi Cheng*, 骨骼支撑), *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯), *ground path*, path-of-force-propagation (*Jing Lu*, 劲路), and develops your whole-body balanced-force (*Yi Guan Zhi Li*, 一贯之力).

诀曰：体察对方力量的强弱和方向。

At this phase of training and conditioning, both partners should use “*sufficient*” whole-body balanced-force to provide “*light resistance*” to each others movement within the pattern being practiced. Only minimal resistance should be used until each partner re-patterns his movement to that of harmonized whole-body usage of the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). As one's competence in coordinated whole-body movement improves, increase the level of resistance and force. But, be gradual with this increase! Employ your balanced-force via the resilient *connected-ness* of the body (*Jie Jie Guan Tong*, 节节贯通) to direct the force at the contact points toward your partner's central line and to absorb and re-direct your partner's force away from your central line (*Shou Zhong Yong Zhong*, 守中用中) with appropriate rotations of body elements (*Luo Xuan Zuan Fan*, 螺旋钻翻) to create openings and to control your opponent. Maintain your balance (equilibrium), *alignment*, *connected-ness*, and structure (*frame*, *Jian Jia*, 肩架) when both delivering and receiving forces. Do not be immobilized; do not revert to use localized movement and/or force. As in relaxed-standing practice, maintain an elastic spring-like extension (*Tan Xing*, 弹性) and flexibility at all your joints (*Guan Jie Ling Huo*, 关节灵活).



You must use “*sufficient*” force (tension) to overcome resistance. There must be relaxation within tension and tension within relaxation in your relaxation/tension exchange. Be aware of and avoid rigidity and stiffness (*Jin Er Bu Jiang*, 紧而不僵). Rigidity/stiffness leads to the major fault of “direct force” versus “direct force” (*Ding*, 顶) limiting your ability to adapt and change. It is an exploitable flaw in an opponent. Care must be taken to not use too much force or resistance at this phase. Before whole-body harmony has been fully integrated into your push-hands, when dealing with excessive force, it is a common error to resort (revert) to the use of localized strength and/or isolated movement of the limbs (*Ju Bu*, 局部). Always use whole-body balanced-force (*Zheng Ti*, 整体) against your opponent’s localized force (*Ju Bu*, 局部). When necessary, take a half step backwards to maintain your equilibrium.

The object here is not winning or vying for superior position but to work under *light resistance* to explore, experiment, experience, increase, develop, and cultivate your balanced-force. There is no shame in losing, only in not learning from the experience.

NOTES: Working against light resistance with large full range motions builds your strength and speed; working against strong resistance builds your power and endurance.

## Techniques Training

Solo practice (*Dan Cao Shou*, 单操手) of various maneuvers/techniques, performed as trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) or virtual push-hands (*Mo Ni Tui Shou*, 模拟推手) exercises, will only ingrain in the mind-body the correct coordinated whole-body neuromuscular movement patterns of each maneuver/technique practiced, achieving harmony of actions. It is necessary to learn the timing, distance interval, angle, contact position, feel and interactive relations of a correctly executed maneuver/technique by practicing with a partner.

诀曰：虚实转移枢纽处，若非久历永不知。

Oral Tradition: Knowing when and where to take the appropriate actions, to sense adapt and change according to your opponent, can only come from real experience obtained from diligent realistic push-hands and sparring practices.

For maximum benefit and efficiency in push-hands training at this phase, your partner/trainer, *initially*, must “*nurse*” you; must allow you to correctly and completely execute each technique by providing the appropriate quantity and quality of opposing force or resistance. Here, the cooperative trainer/trainee system and an experienced partner/trainer are essential.

One partner assumes the role of the trainer/teacher, and the other the role of trainee/student who is attempting to learn the technique. The trainer/teacher must lead/nurture (*Wei*, 喂, *Dai*, 带) the trainee/student to the successful execution of the technique being practiced by providing force or

resistance that is consistent in timing, speed, volume, and direction. In the beginning stage, the trainer must not attempt to defeat or even neutralize the effort of the trainee. The trainer's role here is not merely that of a “dummy”. He must be attentive to the trainee's effort and provide him with reliable feedback. As for the trainee, he must determine the level of intensity of the trainer's force and opposition that he can work with in a relaxed, coordinated, whole-body manner and direct the trainer accordingly. Here, the trainee should always bear in mind that slow, correct, and repetitive execution is the best way to ingrain the technique into “*muscle memory*”. Repetition is the mother of all skills and realistic training is the key to any expertise. The trainee wants to feel the correct execution of techniques and a cooperative partner helps him to do just that.

诀曰：切磋棚挤着，万遍不失，乃为成艺。

You must practice executing each selected technique repeatedly until correct execution is instinctive, natural, and reflexive – making them become subconscious responses to specific external stimuli, establishing *un*-conscious decision-making reference points.

诀曰：待到自动化阶段才能够谈到应用。

**Oral Tradition:** Skills must become spontaneous reflexes before they are useful.

This will require thousands of repetitions. Mistakes and failures in correct execution are to be expected; do not be discouraged by this. Persevere in your attempts. Strive for smoothness and coordination. Practice each technique slowly; high-speed execution at this stage is not beneficial because when moving fast, it is hard to catch the flaws and mistakes in your techniques. Practicing techniques with errors will simply reinforce those errors. Slow down and perfect your movement; eliminate all unnecessary physical movement and negative mental distractions. Slow is smooth; smooth is fast. A large number of correct repetitions will program the technique in your brain and nervous system as an automatic, spontaneous, subconscious reaction to specific external stimuli (the type of force or resistance presented by your partner). Speed in execution of your techniques will come naturally as the movement becomes second nature to you, becomes habitual, become spontaneous reflex.

When the student has mastered a technique, achieved whole-body harmony, the trainer/teacher must then do “*counter actions*” to provide the opportunities for the trainee/student to learn the ability to sense, change, refine, and adapt, to acquire “*agility*” in preparation for a follow-up attack. Be sure to include these instinctive reactive movement exercises (*Fan Ying*, 反应) because your performance depends on the unpredictable reactions of your opponent.

NOTES: Perform every technique to completion with proper follow through. Always follow the neutralizing of your partner's force or resistance with an explosive power discharge/release (to be performed at this phase with explosive pushing power release); do not hold back or stop on contact. You do not want to acquire the habit of holding back because once you get into the

habit of holding back, you will not be able to turn-on your power when you need it. Stay relaxed appropriately!

## Fight Simulation Training

Push-hands (*Dui Kang Xing Tui Shou*, 对抗性推手) at this phase becomes competitive in nature (*Dui Kang Xing*, 对抗性); indeed, within the context of whatever pattern is being practiced, it is approached as a fight simulation. Here, push-hands provides the setting in which to practice offensive and defensive techniques with an opponent without the need for protective equipment, insomuch as the guidelines for this stage of training substitute explosive pushing for punching and striking. The push-hands pattern being practiced obviously dictates the general movements permitted by the participants and whatever techniques attempted by the participants necessarily develop from the parameters of the pattern. These and other factors differentiate push-hands from free sparring (*San Shou*, 散手; *Shi Zhan*, 实战). However, subconsciously the basic OODA cycle (John Boyd) is always in operation: Combatants first *observe* their opponents, *orient* themselves so they can understand the situation, then they make a *decision* to direct their activities, and then they take *action*. In this phase of push-hands training, you must have an aggressive attitude (combat mindset); learn to hinder your opponent's movement and actions, use your opponent's guard against him, and disorient him by doing the unexpected; be proactive, offensive, initiate attacks and changes, use broken rhythm and control/create engagement opportunities.

诀曰：牵制对手，应机而发，因势而变。

Oral Tradition: Hinder your opponent's movement/actions to gain moment time; control/create engagement opportunities; change and adapt according to your opponent.

You must have the attitude that your training partner is a "real opponent" and consequently develop a combat mindset. At this phase, if you simply go round and round without the mental attitude of dealing with a real adversary, your practice becomes a waste of time. You must avoid rolling your arms (*Da Lun*, 打轮) without any purpose; train to achieve selected goals (*You Yi Er Lian*, 有意而练). This is the place and time to try out techniques, and to realize and learn from your mistakes. The effectiveness of a maneuver/technique depends on the reaction of your opponent, and it cannot be predicted. Adapt and change according to your opponent. Study yourself in action with another person. Winning or losing here is not important; learning from the results of your efforts is. There is no shame in losing, falling down, only in not learning, not getting up to try again. Stay focused, be totally in the present, and use maximum effort, do not develop the habit of holding back, you will not be able to turn-on your power when you need it.

For fight simulation (or preparation for an attack) conditioning, be aware that you do not fall into the trap of using formulated methodical routine (sequential patterns) as response, i.e., avoid “if this then that” formulation.

诀曰：万不可走入招式断续的方法。

Oral Tradition: Do not cultivate sequential patterns of response as methods of solution to the non-static problems of fighting.

诀曰：若以目之所见，一再思察，然后出手以应敌，鲜有不败者。

Oral Tradition: If you use conscious procedural thinking (sequential processing) to observe, analyze, and then react, you will lose most of your hand-to-hand encounters or confrontations.

For competition or fight simulation push-hands (*Dui Kang Xing Tui Shou*, 对抗性推手), as in a fight, you do not have time to think with your conscious mind. You cannot predict/anticipate when and from where an attack is coming, and then take appropriate action. Therefore, do not attempt procedural thinking (serial processing with your conscious mind). Feel or perceive what your opponent is doing and act/react instinctively, instantaneously, and automatically (parallel processing with your *un*-conscious mind). In a compressed time frame, your action/reaction is best relegated to your powerful *un*-conscious mind. You make *un*-conscious decisions based on what you perceive, how you orient that perception, and the time allowed. Apply the training and experience learned in the push-hands training as *un*-conscious decision-making reference points: reacting spontaneously, instinctively, naturally, using the proper action at the proper time with no conscious mind-intent and effort (*Wu Yi Er Yong*, 无意而用); relegating your actions to your sub-conscious. With all techniques “*forgotten*”, with the conscious mind *un*-aware of its work, your sub-conscious mind is left alone to handle the situation, actions flow with no conscious effort. Do not make competition push-hands (or fighting) a static thing and invent methodical solution (sequential patterns) to this dynamic problem. Also, always follow through with an “explosive push” power release (with maximum force) because once you get into the habit of holding back, you will not be able to turn-on your power when you need it.

诀曰：不加思索，顺手拈来，不期然而然，莫知为而为。

Oral Tradition: Use the proper action spontaneously at the proper time without being consciously aware of the action.

Therefore, instead of wasting time and energy memorizing sequential patterns (*Zhao Shi*, 招式) of movements as response, the proper approach is that you should adhere faithfully to proven concepts and principles (*Quan Quan Fu Ying*, 拳拳服膺) and let your sub-conscious reflexes automatically execute the proper actions at the proper time without conscious mind-intent (*Bu*

*Qi Zi Ran Zhi*, 不期自然至) because your brain functions by giving priority to concepts and principles rather than to specific maneuvers and/or techniques.

诀曰:有形练到无形处,练到无形是真功。

Oral Tradition: Practice and develop your maneuver/technique with proper external form; change, adapt, and refine it until it becomes form-less. A maneuver/technique is most effective when it is form-less, when skills are internalized as spontaneous reflexes.

Now, let us explore some proven push-hands concepts and principles.

## Push-hands Concepts

The following are proven concepts and principles that you should adhere to faithfully (*Quan Quan Fu Ying*, 拳拳服膺) in competitive push-hands (and/or hand-to-hand fighting):

1. 诀曰:守中用中。

Protect your central line (*Zhong Xian*, 中线) and attack your opponent's central line. Apply your whole-body balanced-force at one or more contact points to threaten/attack your opponent's central line.

2. 诀曰:骨骼支撑,舒展连通,气力均整,全身力一。

Always use coordinated, harmonized, whole-body movement with optimal *alignment*, musculoskeletal support, and proper *connected-ness* to allow the efficient propagation/transmission of the balanced-force. Merge all force components as “one”.

3. 诀曰:形曲力直,关节灵活,形不破体。

Use curved external physical form to deliver linear balanced-force. Maintain your posture and *frame* (*Jian Jia*, 肩架) integrity. Keep all joints slightly bent, elastic spring-like (*Tan Xing*, 弹性), and flexible.

4. 诀曰:意不有象。

Hide your intention; do not “*telegraph*” your moves. There should be no wasted motions and no give-away movements prior to any attack.

5. 诀曰:力不出尖,筋肉收敛而抒发。

Keep your hands within your “*comfort zone*” and your force balanced with no absolute direction in order to be able to react in any direction at will.

6. 诀曰：支点力滚丝，螺旋力无形。

In all your actions, make use of mechanical advantage of forces with attention to fulcrum, moment arms, leverage, contact points, forearm angles, inclined planes, and spirals. “*Drive*” with your “core” and use natural spiral/helical movement. The spiral force component (*Luo Xuan Li*, 螺旋力) from the rotation of the torso, twisting at the joints, and *drilling* of the limbs, should be invisible.

7. 诀曰：力从足生，拔地欲飞。

Take up power from the ground: transmit the reaction forces from *drilling* of your legs and pushing off with your feet through clean path-of-force-propagation to the contact points. Keep all joints *aligned*, spring-like, and mildly extended (between 90 and 180 degrees) to increase elasticity and maintain *connected-ness* to deliver your balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力).

8. 诀曰：节节贯通，全身及根节之力前摧，中节待转，梢节直刺。

Use gravity, inertia, and momentum as allies. Avoid using muscles against momentum. Keep the path-of-force-propagation clean; *drive* the movement of your limbs from the center (core/torso).

9. 诀曰：推手散手结合。

Use your opponent’s guard against him; change the incoming force direction (*Gai Bian Dui Fang Li Xiang*, 改变对方力向), apply forces at the contact points to disturb his equilibrium and create openings. If your guard (forearms/hands) can be used by your opponent to *un-balance* you (mental and physical), you have made a mistake. You must strive to control your opponent using his guard.

10. 诀曰：攻守合一。

Synthesize offense and defense. When one hand is on the attack, the other should be positioned and readied to guard or to follow-up with additional attacks.

However, once understood, do not be overly conscious of these concepts and principles. Instead of trying to adhere to them, pretend that you have already mastered them.

诀曰：神动得自有象外，意存妙在无念中。

Oral Tradition: Conjure up your visualization from your imagination, from beyond physical forms and moves. Do not be conscious of using your mind-intent and mental visualization. Visualization should be effort-less, maintained with no conscious attention.

## Methods and Procedures

Push-hands can be viewed as a study of position and movement of body elements (kinesthesia) and their relationship to manipulating the interactive forces between you and your opponent. You need to pay special attention to correct postural requirements (*Dao Wei*, 到位). We will now explore the relationship of speed, timing, distance interval, and rhythm of your maneuvers using Yiquan basic push-hands.

In beginners' push-hands training, a cooperative partner is extremely valuable. Indeed, it is necessary to train with such a partner if a beginner hopes to advance his ability beyond that of a rudimentary level. While there are many patterns, we will describe the basic skills for only two quintessential patterns: Single Hand (*Dan Tui Shou*, 单推手) and Dual Hand or "rolling hands" (*Shuang Tui Shou*, 双推手) push-hands.

## Push-Hands Patterns

**Definition:** To describe actions between you (trainee/student) and an opponent (trainer/teacher), we will visualize an imaginary vertical clock face attached to your opponent, the twelve o'clock is on his forehead, the six o'clock at his navel, three o'clock at his left shoulder, nine o'clock at his right shoulder, and the center of the clock at his mouth/throat. We will use the position of the hour hand to indicate the angle of the attacking force to or from your opponent.

There are many push-hands patterns; you do not need to learn all of them; become effective by selecting only the quintessential ones. Yiquan uses two basic push-hands patterns to simulate:

1. Outside engagement with one contact point (*Dan Da Shou*, 单搭手), and
2. Squared-on engagement with two contact points (*Shuang Da Shou*, 双搭手).

These actually cover all possible engagement possibilities. You must master fixed-step (*Ding Bu*, 定步) push-hands before attempt free-step (*Huo Bu*, 活步) training. In a confrontation, you

cannot predict the initial contact points. Therefore, you must practice using different contact points to feel, perceive, and release power.

## 1. Single-Hand Push-Hands (*Dan Tui Shou*, 单推手)

Assume both “*A*” and “*B*” start with the small-step posture with right leg forward stepping on opponents’ center-line and right forearms in contact (one contact point, *Ding Bu Dan Da Shou*, 定步单搭手).

诀曰：两手结合，迎面伸出，前伸后撤，左右封固，务须守着中线。

Do not drop your non-contact hand (insubstantial hand, parry hand, *Hou Shou*, 后手). Position it near your lead hand (substantial hand, *Qian Shou*, 前手) in coordination to be able to assist as necessary. Guard and protect your central line. Prop elbows out (*Cheng San Bao Qi*, 撑三抱七); keep forearms at a slant angle (not vertical, not horizontal), all joints must be larger than 90 and smaller than 180 degrees. Relax! *Stick* (*Zhan Lian Zhan Sui*, 沾连粘随), and keep a light touch using “*sufficient*” force.

This simulates the initial outside engagement contact in an encounter, an outside engagement preparation of an attack; it occurs as soon as one fighter attacks with his lead hand and the other put up his lead hand to parry on the outside. Theoretically, this pattern requires partners to maintain one contact point at the forearms (*Bu Diu*, 不丢). While keeping this contact point, they may move in any pattern in 3-dimension space. Do not confine the movement pattern to a single plane (2-dimension). You must seize the initiative by changing direction in three-dimensional space, adapting to your opponents actions; create and control engagement opportunities.

Typical single-hand push-hands start-up movement (*Dan Tui Shou Da Lun*, 单推手打轮):

1. With right palm facing down, *A* presses forward, inward, and slightly downward using whole-body force (pushing off the left rear foot twisting knees inwards; *Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋); directing the force at the contact point towards *B*’s central line (at the center of the imaginary clock face).
2. *B* receives/meets the force by matching its speed and direction (sinks and directs it to the ground through his properly *aligned* and *connected* body) while maintaining forearms in contact; slightly retreats, twists his right forearm from palm facing down to palm facing his nose (rise *drill* rotation with elbow lower than wrist; *Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋). Simultaneously, *B* pivots and rotates his torso to his right to deflect *A*’s attack to the right of his central line (towards *A*’s 3 o’clock position). *B*’s lateral deflection should be small (*Xiao Quan Zhuan*



*Guan*, 小圈转关), just enough for *A*'s force to miss and not exposing *B*'s own central line (*Gai Bian Dui Fang Li Xiang*, 改变对方力向).

3. Twisting his forearm in a down overturn rotation (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), *B* presses forward using whole-body force; directing the force (originating from the ground) at the contact point towards *A*'s central line (at the center of the imaginary clock face).
4. *A* receives/meets the force while maintaining forearms in contact; slightly retreats, twists his right forearm and rotates his torso to deflect *B*'s attack to the right of his central line (towards *B*'s 3 o'clock position).

Repeat this basic single-hand push-hands “rolling arms” pattern (*Da Lun*, 打轮) of attacking to your opponent's central line and deflecting attack from your own central line continuously. Note, in this elementary exercise, keep your wrist higher than your elbow to present a slant surface to your opponent's downward force. Use “small circle” (*Xiao Quan*, 小圈) to turn at the gate (*Zhuan Guan*, 转关) to deflect/neutralize with folding (*Zhe Die*, 摺叠) to dominate the contact point (*Qiang Dian*, 抢点); use large arc to attack. Protect your central line and attack your opponent's central line. When you have mastered the basic movements in fixed-step, then practice them with the shuffle step (fencing step). When advancing to attack your opponent's central line: Push off your rear foot to advance your lead foot, then your rear foot follows. When retreating to protect your central line: Push off your lead foot to retreat your rear foot, then your lead foot follows.

**Examples of Variations** (*Dan Tui Shou Bian Hua*, 单推手变化): When you have mastered free-step basic single-hand push-hand *Da Lun* (*Huo Bu Dan Tui Shou Da Lun*, 活步单推手打轮), you may explore the attack/defense of forces from different angles.

**Dominating the Point** (*Qiang Dian*, 抢点): Control and create engagement opportunities by dominating the contact point; intimidate you opponent mentally and physically.

**Forward/downward drill** (下压内螺旋变化): When the downward component of the force applied by your opponent is strong and to your inside (towards the 6 o'clock; *Quan Li*, 圈里), you can neutralize it by *drilling* your hand forward, downward, and inwards (similar to downward punch; *Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), lifting your elbow above your wrist to slide his arm off your slanting forearm to the inside (*Quan Li Xia Luo Xuan*, 圈里下螺旋). This may draw a startled response from which you may attack and/or recover.

**Downward drill/Upward drill**: During single-hand push-hands, if your opponent grasps your forearm and/or pulls you forward towards his outside (*Quan Wai*, 圈外); do not resist by pulling backwards. Instead, *drill* your forearm forward, downward, and inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺

旋) with your elbow higher than your wrist, then rotate your core/torso towards his inside (*Quan Li*, 圈里), circling your forearm under his forearm to his inside (*Quan Li*, 圈里) and lift your wrist to be higher than your elbow while continuing your inward forearm *drill* (*Shang Luo Xuan*, 上螺旋). You are now in position to attack your opponent's central line.

**Downward/backward press, forward push** (下压变化): Keep your wrist higher than your elbow when pressing downward, backward, and slightly outward in order to maintain control of your opponent's forearm. When pushing forward in riposte, do not lift your lead hand forearm and elbow; allow your forearm to slide on top of your opponent's forearm to attack his central line. *Drill* legs inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), squeeze the imaginary spring between your knees (*Jia Xi Fa Li*, 夹膝发力), take up power from the ground.

**Lateral deflect, lateral push:** Simultaneously, twist your forearm in a down overturn (*Ni*, 逆) rotation (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) and pivot your waist as you do lateral deflect (towards the 3-4 o'clock if you are in a right lead). Use the bend of your wrist (the thumb side) between your hand and your forearm to hook/hang (*Gou Gua*, 勾挂) your opponent's forearm. Keep your guard hand (parry hand) at your central line and control your opponent's elbow and shoulder. When doing lateral push in riposte, *drill* lead leg inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), take up power from the ground, keep path-of-force-propagation from the lead foot to your lead hand clean. Twist lead forearm outwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) to deliver your lateral push.

**Rear hook hand exchange, forward hand lateral strike:** From a right lead posture, if your opponent's force is towards your left shoulder (the 9-10 o'clock), use your left rear hand to hook/hang (*Gou Gua*, 勾挂) his right forearm from below and execute a lateral outward strike with your right (*Ce Pi*, 侧劈). Take up power from your lead foot to your lead hand (*drill* leg downwards and inwards, 腿似钻).

**Rear hand downward press, elbow strike:** When using your rear hand (parry hand) in a downward press assist, press downward, backward, and slightly inward (towards the 4-5 o'clock if you are in a right lead). Riposte with inward swinging elbow strike (*Zhou Fa*, 肘法).

**Rear hand downward press, front hand downward strike:** Extend your spine as you press downwards, stretching the imaginary spring between your front foot and your head. Sink your whole-body downwards and compress this spring on your downward strike (*Pi Fa*, 劈法).

**Neutralize lateral deflect with shoulder strike:** If your right lead hand is deflected towards the 7-8 o'clock angle, step into your opponent's center gate (*Zhong Men*, 中门) with your right lead foot to deliver your right shoulder strike (*Kao*, 靠).

诀曰:步踏中门钻入重心夺敌位,即是神手亦难防。

Oral Tradition: It is difficult, even for an expert fighter, to defend against an attacker who is stepping into his center gate, displacing and occupying his center, knocking him off balance.

**Down Press and Punch:** When combining punches into push-hands or using push-hands as preparation, make your parry/deflection small, you only need to open the line. Maintain control of your opponent's arms as you create the opening to deliver your punches, slide your attacking forearm over your opponent's forearm as you strike (*Quan Fa*, 拳法).

In competitive push-hands (*Dui Kang Xing Tui Shou*, 对抗性推手), you should minimize the number of revolutions in your arms "rolling" (*Da Lun*, 打轮); do not become "motor-set" and "roll" around with no purpose.

诀曰:全身及根节之力前摧,中节待转,梢节直刺。

Oral Tradition: Use your harmonized whole-body to drive your shoulder, your shoulder to drive your forearm. Twist your forearms in contact with your opponent to deflect your opponent's forces while delivering straight (linear) power (with curved form) with your hands.

诀曰:未进关手宜轻虚,已进关手宜重实。

Oral Tradition: Keep your touch light prior to committing to attack so you can change and adapt according to your opponent; when committed, use (aggressive) explosive whole-body balanced-force behind all your blows.

## 2. Dual-Hands Push-Hands (*Shuang Tui Shou*, 双推手)

Using both forearms with two contact points introduce complexity to your training in whole-body neuromuscular coordination. Assume "*A*" and "*B*" are both in the right-lead small-step postures, facing each other squared-on. *A*'s right forearm maintains contact with *B*'s left forearm; *A*'s left forearm maintains contact with *B*'s right forearm (*Shuang Da Shou*, 双搭手).

Theoretically, *A* and *B* can move in any pattern as long as the two contact points are maintained. From *A*'s view, the four possible dual-hands push-hands movement patterns are:

1. Both arms move clockwise.
2. Both arms move counter-clockwise.
3. Left arm moves counter-clockwise; right arm moves clockwise.

4. Left arm moves clockwise; right arm moves counter-clockwise.

Yiquan uses pattern #4 as the “start-up rolling movement”. This dual-hands push-hands pattern is also called “*rolling hands*” (*Shuang Tui Shou Da Lun*, 双推手打轮).

诀曰：两手结合，迎面伸出，前伸后撤，左右封固，务须守着中线。

While your two hands may or may not be in synch, the situations to consider are:

1. When both of your hands are on top, above or to the outside of your opponent's hands,
2. When both of your hands are below or to the inside of your opponent's hands,
3. When both of your hands are below and to the outside of your opponent's hands,
4. When both of your hands are on top and to the inside of your opponent's hands,
5. When one of your hands is above (outside or inside) and the other is below (inside or outside) your opponent's hand.

When your hand (forearm) is on the outside (*Quan Wai*, 圈外) and above, maintain a hugging-in (*Bao*, 抱) force at the contact point towards your opponent's central line. Keep your wrist higher than your elbow; twist your forearm slightly outwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) in a *rise drill* (*Qi Zuan*, 起钻) rotation (*Shun*, 顺).

When your hand (forearm) is on the outside (*Quan Wai*, 圈外) and below, maintain a hugging-in force at the contact point towards your opponent's central line. Keep your elbow higher than your wrist; twist your forearm slightly inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) in a *fall overturn* (*Luo Fan*, 落翻) rotation (*Ni*, 逆).

When your hand (forearm) is on the inside (*Quan Li*, 圈里) and below your opponent's hand, prop-out your elbow and maintain an outward prop-out (*Cheng*, 撑) force to protect your central line. Keep your wrist higher than your elbow; twist your forearm slightly outwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) in a *rise drill* rotation (*Shun*, 顺).

When your hand (forearm) is on the inside (*Quan Li*, 圈里) and above your opponent's hand, prop-out your elbow and maintain an outward prop-out force to protect your central line. Keep your elbow higher than your wrist; twist your forearm slightly inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) in a *fall overturn* rotation (*Ni*, 逆).

The primary concept is: keep the contact points (circular) convex (*Chu Chu Cheng Yuan*, 触处成圆). Pay special attention to the wrist and forearm joint positions. Protect your central line while directing the force at one or both contact points towards your opponent's central line. Remember, push-hands is supplemental to sparring; keep your training practical and realistic. Be sure to use the *rise drill* (*Shun*, 顺) and *fall overturn* (*Ni*, 逆) rotations of your forearms to direct forces at the contact points towards your opponent's central line as well as to protect your central line. Pay attention to the changing roles of the substantial (lead) and insubstantial (rear) hands. Actions may involve variations of both hands directing forces in the same direction or each hand directing force in different directions. As in single-hand push-hands, start initially with fixed-step (*Ding Bu*, 定步) practice then advance to incorporate free-steps (*Huo Bu*, 活步) with rolling hands. Use small rapid wading steps to control your equilibrium in mobility. Every step should result in a perfectly balanced (equilibrium) small-step posture with optimal body *alignment*, proper *connected-ness*, and *transmitting the ground* through a clean path-of-force-propagation (*Jie Jie Guan Tong*, 节节贯通) to the contact points (*Li Dian*, 力点) of your substantial and insubstantial hands.

**Examples of Variations** (*Shuang Tui Shou Bian Hua*, 双推手变化): After you have mastered dual-hand push-hands arms rolling (*Da Lun*, 打轮), you need to study attack/defense from different angles, timing, and distances. The following is an incomplete (short) list of dual-hand push-hands basics. Each example is valid only when the opponent's forces provide the correct external stimuli for the spontaneous reflexive response; do not memorize it as a sequential response pattern (i.e., a “if this then that” pattern).

### **When both hands are on-top/outside:**

#### **1. Downward/backward press, forward push**

Apply forward, inward, and upward pressure at the contact points to induce your opponent to react; when your opponent pushes back (or forward to attack), change the direction of your opponent's attacking force by pressing both arms downward, backward, and slightly outward, with inward forearms twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), to create an opening (*Fu An Shi Li*, 扶按试力). Keep your wrists higher than your elbows to control your opponent's forearms. When countering by pushing your hands forward (梢节直刺) to attack, slide your forearms on top of your opponent's forearms; drill both legs with inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), compress the imaginary spring between your knees, to take up power from the ground.

#### **2. Lateral spin, forward push**

Apply forward, and inward pressure at the contact points to induce your opponent to react; when your opponent pushes back (or forward to attack), change the direction of your opponent's attacking force by turning it aside with a “lateral

spin” (*Xuan Fa Shi Li*, 旋法试力). If you wish to go left, initiate your move by first going to your right and vice versa (欲左先右, 欲右先左). To go left, synchronize both arms to pull backward, upward, and to your right. Your left hand must not cross over your central line to your right; it should guard your central line. Then “spin” your opponent's arms laterally downwards to your left to disturb his balance. Your right hand must not cross over your central line to the left; it should guard your central line. Stay close to your opponent so you can follow-up with your explosive forward push.

**3. Upward/forward drill**

Twisting your forearms outwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), *drill* both hands upward, forward, and slightly inward (中节待转) to apply a forward upward inward force at the contact points. This is used in combination with (or prior to) a downward/backward press or lateral spin to create an opening. Directing your force forward, inward, and slightly upward, driving your whole-body force through your elbows (全身之力前摧) may by itself knock your opponent off balance.

**4. Upward/forward drill and lateral press**

One arm *drills* upward, forward, and inward with outward twisting (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) while the other presses downward, backward, and outward with inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋). The upward *drilling* hand must not cross over your central line; the force at this contact point should point towards your opponent's central line. By repeatedly switching sides, use whole-body force driving through your elbows (*Gen Jie Qian Cui*, 根节前摧) to keep your opponent off balance (双虎爪法).

**5. Downward/lateral punch**

Press downward, backward, and outward with inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) with one arm while punch/*drill* downward, forward, and inward with inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) towards your opponent's central line with the other (*Heng Xiang Zai Quan*, 横向栽拳). Do not disconnect the contract point of your punching arm; simply slide your forearm on top of your opponent's forearm as you punch.

**6. Downward press and upward drill**

Press downward, backward, and outward with inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) with one arm while punch/*drill* upward, forward, and inward with outward twisting (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) towards your opponent's central line with the other. The arm *drilling* upward, forward, and inward (*Zuan Quan*, 钻拳) must not cross over your central line; do not disconnect its contact point;

simply slide your forearm on top of your opponent's. One hand is used as preparation for the real blow with the other hand.

**When both hands are below/inside:**

**1. Hook/hang hands, then forward push**

Keep your *hook/hang* (*Gou Gua*, 勾挂) hands deflecting movement small; pull both hands backward, upward, and outward with outward twisting (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋). You must introduce lateral open force to “tear” open your opponent's guard (*Si Kai*, 撕开). You only need to create an opening or induce a startled response. Then snap forearms to palms forward for an explosive forward push. Keep elbows prop-out; do not straighten and lock your elbows; be able to change to push/pull or pull/push (*Tui La Hu Yong*, 推拉互用) or to the lateral open/close directions at will.

**2. Downward/forward drill with both hands**

Use this to induce your opponent to use forward force for you to exploit, then do (1) *hook/hang* (*Gou Gua*, 勾挂) to create an opening. Or, when your opponent pulls downward and backward, follow and stick to his pull, move both hands downward, forward, and inward with inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋). As he comes forward to attack, change the direction of his attacking force with (3) or (4) below.

**3. Downward drill and hook/hang hands**

Lateral deflect: Use one hand to *hook/hang* (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) and pull upwards, backwards while using the other in a forward/downward drill (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) with upward lifting elbow to deflect an incoming force laterally. Synchronize the hands; one hand moves downward, forward, and inward while the other upward, backward, and outward. Be sure to take up power from the ground. Keep your opponent off balance by repeatedly switching sides (*Luo Xuan Li Wu Xing*, 螺旋力无形). Create an opening for single hand forward push (or chop) and *hook/hang* combination. Make sure when drilling your hand downward, forward, and inward that it does not cross over your central line; and the force at the contact point or your elbow are pointed towards your opponent's central line.

**4. Upward drill**

Move both hands upward, forward, and inward (全身之力前摧); take up power from the ground; deliver explosive power (*Zuan Quan*, 钻拳) onto targets on your opponent's central line, e.g., upward punch to chin or upward elbow to chest (双手齐出). With both arms *drilling* upwards with outward twisting (*Wai Luo*

*Xuan*, 外螺旋), you can “*rip open*” your opponent's guard for an attack to his central line.

**5. Hook/hang and upward drill**

One hand moving upward, backward, and outward to defend while the other upward, forward, and inward (*Zuan Quan*, 钻拳) to strike targets on opponent's central line (单手独进). *Drill* the leg under your lead (striking) hand inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) to take up power from the ground.

**6. Downward drill and upward drill**

One hand moving upward, backward, and outward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) to defend while the other moving downward, forward, and inward (*Zai Quan*, 栽拳) to attack your opponent's central line. You may use one (either one) hand as preparation for the other to deliver the real blow. *Drill* the leg on the side of the attacking hand inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) to take up power from the ground.

**When one hand is on-top/outside and one hand is below/inside:**

**1. Hook/hang and lateral/downward press, then forward push**

Use small movement; just enough to open up the line. Initiate your attack by *drilling* forward/upward/inward with hand on top (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) and forward/downward/inward with hand below (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) to induce your opponent to resist with force for you to exploit. Then reverse your action; hook/hang upward/backward/outward with hand below (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) and press outward/downward/backward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) with hand on top with lateral opening backward force to disturb his balance (*Fen Gua*, 分挂); follow through with an explosive forward push.

**2. Forward/upward drill and forward/downward drill**

Use this to compliment (1). Induce your opponent to use force for you to exploit by moving the hand on top upward, forward, inward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) while the other moving downward, forward, and inward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), applying force towards his central line prior to executing (1).

**3. Upward/forward drill and hook/hang**

Use this to change the direction of an incoming force to the side (lateral). To be effective, make use of the open gates. Upward/forward *drill* may be replaced by forward/inward push or backward/inward pull. *Drill* the hand on top upward, forward, and inward with outward twisting (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) while the other hook/hang upward, backward, and outward also with outward twisting.



Sense opponent's force direction; adapt and change using different maneuvers with agility. The upward/inward *drilling* hand must not cross over your central line; the force at its contact point or at its elbow should point and threaten your opponent's central line.

**4. Downward/forward *drill* and lateral/downward press**

Use this to change the direction of an incoming force to the side (lateral). Or, use to compliment (3). Induce your opponent to use force for you to exploit. Use combination of (3) and (4) with larger lateral movement to “*shake*” your opponent off balance. Press the hand on top backward, downward, and outward with inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) while *drilling* the hand below forward, downward, and inward with inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋); lifting up your elbow to be higher than your wrist to apply force upward/inward towards your opponent's central line.

**5. Downward/forward *drill* and hook/hang**

*Drill* the hand on top of your opponent's hand downward, forward, and inward to strike (*Zai Quan*, 栽拳) while pulling the hand under your opponent's hand in a hook/hang (*Gou Gua*, 勾挂) motion upward, backward, and outward (*Dan Shou Du Jin*, 单手独进).

**6. Upward/forward *drill* and lateral/downward press**

Press the hand on top of your opponent's hand backward, downward, and outward while the hand below your opponent's hand *drills* forward, upward, and inward to strike targets (*Zuan Quan*, 钻拳) on opponent's central line.

## **Spontaneous Reflex Conditioning (*Fan Ying*, 反应)**

Reactive/reflexive movement are learned and trained. The foundation is the small “*amplitude*” whole-body core/torso oscillation practice (*Zheng Ti Dong Dang*, 整体动荡) of relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩). Practice the following drills to reduce your *startled response* lag time and improve your spontaneous reflexes:

**1. Down press counter (*Xia Ya*, 下压)**

Start with your forearms below your opponent's forearms. When your opponent presses your hands downward and backward; *drill* both hands forward, downward, and inward with inward twisting (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) to *stick* and follow your opponent. Then as he attacks with forward push, change the direction of his attacking force to the lateral direction by downward inward *drilling* (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) with one hand and hook/hang (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) with the other hand.

2. **Hook/hang counter (*Gou Gua*, 勾挂)**  
Start with your forearms on top of your opponent's forearms. When your opponent hooks/hangs (*Gou Gua*, 勾挂) your hands backward, upward and outward, press both forearms forward and inward with outward twisting (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) to *stick* and follow. Then as he attacks with forward push, change the direction of his attacking force with down press (*Fu An*, 扶按) or lateral spin (*Xuan Fa*, 旋法).
3. **Hook/hang and lateral press counter (*Fen Gua*, 分挂)**  
*Stick* and follow then change and adapt. Start with one arm on top and one arm below your opponent's arms. When your opponent uses *Fen Gua* (分挂), you should *stick* and follow (粘随) to hinder his movement. When he attacks with forward push, change the direction of his force (改变力向).
4. **Hit on Preparation (*Du Da*, 堵打)**  
Check and/or jam your opponent's preparation movement before he completes his plan. By hitting into your opponent's guard, attacking your opponent in his preparation, you jam and/or smother his blow in its "*initiate zone*" before it attains any speed, thereby, open the line for follow up attacks. Start with your forearms on the insides (outsides) of your opponent's forearms. When he initiates his forward attack, push forward with inward (outward) twisting to jam his movement (避其虚而击其实). Be sure to use your whole-body balanced-force.

All *Shi Li* (试力) movements and fighting maneuvers/techniques (*San Shou*, 散手) should be explored by using them in push-hands (and sparring). Try out each maneuver/technique in your repertoire; realistic training is the key to any expertise. If unsuccessful, learn from your failures; there is no shame in losing, only in failing to learn from the experience. If you have any questions on a maneuver or techniques, the answer can usually be found in "sparring it out". Again, we emphasize that your advancement will be severely limited if you practice push-hands without practicing and mastering the fundamentals: relaxed-standing, trial-and-feel, footwork, and power discharge/release. To be useful, skills must become spontaneous reflexes. To excel in competitive push-hands, you must study and employ proven tactics.

## Push-Hands Tactics

### Speed, Timing, and Rhythm

Speed (*Su Du*, 速度) and timing (*Shi Ji*, 时机) are complementary. Proper *timing*, *angle*, and distance *interval* are essential for a successful attack. Unless an attack is timed properly, speed

of delivery will not make it more effective; it is not how fast it travels but how soon it gets there that counts. Timing is the ability to recognize and seize the right moment to act, using the proper action at the proper time. Mastery of timing comes from prolong diligent push-hands and sparring practice. Yiquan suggests “three-hits” (*San Da*, 三打):

1. **Hit on Preparation (*Du Da*, 堵打):** Check and/or jam your opponent’s preparation movement before he completes his plan.
2. **Hit on Development (*Jie Da*, 截打):** Intercept your opponent’s attacking limbs as he begins/develops his attack.
3. **Hit on Execution (*Shan Da*, 闪打):** Deflect/pass your opponent’s attack by changing his force direction together with evasion by moving from your opponent’s line of attack.

In other words, you attack your opponent in between his execution of maneuvers (旧力略过新力未生). You must feel, explore, experiment, and learn from experience to master and perceive the proper use of timing (知拍任君斗).

诀曰：若能出手而得已发未发时机之扼要，则非久经实作之惯手难能得也。

Oral Tradition: Push-hands and sparring practice are the most direct paths to gain real fighting experience. Mastery of timing, angle, distance interval, and control and creation of engagement opportunities come from prolong diligent push-hands and sparring practice.

诀曰：敷，盖，对，吞。

Oral Tradition: Basic techniques in changing (gaining) movement time in push-hands are: Smother, Cover, Match, and Draw.

To create the right moment for an attack, you may change your opponent’s *movement time* by:

1. *Smothering* (*Fu*, 敷) to hinder, lengthen or immobilize his movement,
2. *Covering* (*Gai*, 盖) to control, jam or check his action to disturb his rhythm,
3. *Matching* (*Dui*, 对) his movement then redirect, deflect, and counter, and
4. *Drawing* (*Tun*, 吞), absorbing/receiving while withdrawing and/or feinting to lead/induce involuntary moves.

诀曰：攻防在他旧力略过新力未生时。

Oral Tradition: Attack your opponent as he switches between techniques in a complex maneuver or as he switches lead.

**Examples** of proper use of timing:

Keep the proper distance (stay in range) and attack your opponent:

1. As he comes forward, as he steps backwards,
2. As he changes position; as he remains stationary,
3. As he attempts at engagement/disengagement,
4. As he switches between one technique to another in a combination, and
5. As he retracts his limbs and/or change leads.

**Examples** of timing your attacks:

诀曰：先发制人。

Oral Tradition: Fast initiation beats reaction; time is the essence.

**Speed Attack:** There is a slight advantage in initiating an attack if it is backed by superior speed with small magnitude of movement and whole-body balanced-force (*Kuai Gong*, 快攻). Use your speed and your “desire to win” to overwhelm your opponent.

**Broken Rhythm:** Execute a series of false attacks and feints at normal rhythm. When your opponent accustoms his reactions to the cadence (*motor-set*), suddenly speed up or slow down the movements comprising the final attack.

In push-hands, partners of equal ability can usually *stick* and follow each others movement almost in rhythm. When a rhythm has been established, there is a tendency to continue, each man is thus *motor-set*. If you can break rhythm, speed is no longer the primary element. The man who breaks rhythm with an unexpected movement can induce a *startled response* and score an attack with only moderate speed. In competitive push-hands, minimize the number of revolutions (*Da Lun*, 打轮). Avoid “rolling” your arms without any purpose.

**Half Beat:** Perform full count movements to lure your opponent to accept a rhythm, and then break rhythm by striking on the half beat.

**Stop Hit:** When your opponent makes a conscious movement or starts a preparation of an attack, you can attack him when he is executing the movement because until he finishes it, he cannot change to the reverse. Timing to take advantage of the interval before he can readjust to make a parry, attacking halfway through his movement is said to occur on the half beat.

## Common tactics

诀曰:敌不动,己不动,敌微动,己先动。

Oral Tradition: Do not move if your opponent is still; move ahead of your opponent if he attempts to move.

诀曰:后发先至。

Oral Tradition: Let your opponent start but time your attack to arrive and finish first.

诀曰:双手齐出,单手独进。

Oral Tradition: Simultaneously advance both hands; make one hand substantial to attack.

诀曰:左重侧左虚,右重侧右渺。

Oral Tradition: If opponent's left is heavy, empty your left and advance on your right. If opponent's right is heavy, empty your right and advance on your left.

The following is a (incomplete) short list of commonly used push-hands tactics:

诀曰:形不破体,意不有象,力不出尖。

1. Keep your hands within your *comfort zone* and your arms close to, but away from your torso. If your arms contact your torso, you can be immobilized. Leading your opponent's arm beyond his *comfort zone* (*draw*; *Tun*, 吞) will allow you to easily redirect it.
2. Keep your hands up between you and your opponent. When not attacking, maintain a constant distance between your torso and your opponent's torso with use of appropriate footwork. Learn and feel the proper distance *interval*; always keep the proper distance and angle to defend or attack.

3. Whenever possible, gain mechanical advantage, use the upper section of your forearms (near your elbow) to contact your opponent's lower forearm (near his wrist).
4. Never push with only your hands/arms (do not use localized force); always take up power from the ground and use your whole-body to push (全身之力前推). Use direct, straight lines within spirals when attacking and do not disconnect from the contact points. *Stick* to your opponent and bind (*smother*) his arms to hinder their movement, to gain movement time as you attack.
5. When your opponent fails to maintain the contact point (i.e., when there is an absence of touch or disconnect at the contact points; *Tuo Dian*, 脱点), *attack immediately* with clean, crisp, and direct strikes. Always attack “*in time*” against your opponent’s attempt at engagement, change position, and/or retracting his limbs; openings are fleeting.
6. When you detect rigidity/stiffness (*Jiang*, 僵) at the points of contact, use a short, sharp, snapping power release to *shake* (*Dou*, 抖), disturb or shock your opponent physically and mentally. This snapping motion will disorient him momentarily inducing a *startled response* and create an opening for you to press further attacks. Choose the exact psychological and physical moment of weakness in an opponent to attack.
7. Disturb your opponent's posture by immobilizing his joints, either by compressing them or by extending them to the limit (*Ba Gen*, 拔根). Then follow through with a powerful strike.
8. Change on contact (*Yi Chu Ji Bian*, 一触即变) or change in mid-stream; change the direction of your opponent's forces (*Gai Bian Dui Fang Li Xiang*, 改变对方力向). When being advanced on and/or receiving/meeting an attack, *stick* to your opponent's hands/arms, use forearm twisting, smooth curves, and spirals in various planes to redirect your opponent's force.

诀曰：欲往上则先下，欲下则先上，欲左应向右，欲右应向左。

Employing sudden, small, tightening arcs of movement to change direction is an effective offense (小圈转关). First lead (or follow) your opponent one way then quickly redirect your force (e.g., if you intend to push down, precede the downward motion with a small upward motion; if you intend to push left, initiate with a movement to the right, etc.,).

9. Upset your opponent's equilibrium; displace him from his center gate. Move his center of gravity onto one leg and use that as an axis on which to turn or spin him. Work the open gates where he does not have legs.

诀曰：进半步胜人，退半步不输。

10. Win by stepping forward; avoid losing by stepping backward.
11. Use folding of the joints, a quick change in directions and/or transfer of the point of contact to another part of the body (or hand) nearer your central line, to recover from attacks that collapsed your *frame* and/or extended you limbs beyond your *comfort zone* (i.e., your area of maximum control).

诀曰：两手结合迎面出，自然把定五道关。

12. A coordinated two-hand vicious frontal attack is a good defense.

诀曰：一触即发，一发即止。

13. Seize the initiative. “*Explode*” your internal power/strength as external force on contact (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发). A fast explosive power discharge/release is very difficult to deflect or neutralize.

诀曰：有意莫带形。

14. Conceal your intention; do not let your opponent anticipate your next move. Do not “*telegraph*” your intent (*Yi Bu You Xiang*, 意不有象).
15. *Smother* (*Fu*, 敷) an incoming attack by *sticking* your relaxed forearms onto the attacking limb like *covering* (*Gai*, 盖) it with a wet blanket. *Match* (*Dui*, 对) its incoming speed and direction, retard and redirect the attacking force. Follow your opponent’s retreat and overwhelm him by advancing faster than his retreat and adding your force onto his retreating limb.
16. Feint attacks to your opponent's upper level to conceal your attacks to his lower level and vice versa.

## Push-Hands and Fighting

We will close this chapter with a brief exploration of push-hands as preparations for an attack by using your opponent's guard against him in hand-to-hand fighting (*Tui Shou San Shou Jie He*, 推手散手结合). You may consider hand-to-hand fighting to consist of three phases:

1. Start phase; combatants start from non-contact *far interval* (long range); there is an absence of touch at this phase;
2. Engage/exchange phase; combatants in contact (touch) at *strike interval* (medium range) or at *body-to-body interval* (close range);
3. Breakup phase; combatants disengage or separate; fight terminates with or without a winner.

Competitive push-hands (*Dui Kang Xing Tui Shou*, 对抗性推手) maneuvers are a subset of the engage/exchange phase of fighting; they are preparations of attacks. To eliminate the requirement of protective equipment, we have replaced all blows/strikes with long (time wise) explosive pushes in push-hands. However, you can still learn to "*smother*", immobilize and neutralize your opponent's attacks, and follow his retreat into your striking or body-to-body intervals as well as getting a feel for the fighting measure, timing, and attack angle. If we do push-hands; start from the non-contact far interval; minimize the contact time, and allow for blows (strikes and kicks), we are using push-hands as preparation for sparring. This type of touch or push sparring is a good way to learn, to feel, and to perceive your fighting measure and is best done with protective equipment. All the techniques learned in push-hands can be incorporated into your sparring training and if you have questions concerning a maneuver or technique, the answer can usually be found by sparring it out.

诀曰：若能出手而得已发未发时机之扼要，则非久经实作之惯手难能得也。

Oral Tradition: Push-hands and sparring practices are the most direct paths to gain real fighting experiences. Mastery of timing and control of engagement opportunities come from prolong diligent push-hands and sparring practices.

**Examples** of combining dual-hand push-hands with strikes and blows (推手散手结合):

1. **Straight Punch**  
Control your opponent's forearms and slide your forearms on top of them to punch, do not disconnect the contact points. Pull back your non-punching hand



with focus (isometric-opposing-force-pair) to guard your nose/mouth/throat area to integrate offense and defense as one (攻守合一).

2.     **Upward Punch**  
You may use the upward punch when your forearms are above or below your opponent's forearms. Do not disconnect the contact points; just rotate and slide at the contact points to deliver the upward punch.
3.     **Downward Punch**  
Press downward and pull with your non-punching hand to disorient your opponent while delivering your downward punch. Slide your punching forearm over or under your opponent's forearm (lateral hook punch).
4.     **Elbow**  
Rotate your forearm on the contact point to deliver your elbow strike. When your forearm is on top of your opponent's, use horizon elbow; when your forearm is below, use vertical elbow strike.
5.     **Shoulder**  
Use shoulder strike towards your opponent's central line as a counter for a lateral downward deflect defense.
6.     **Head Butt**  
Gain control of your opponent's arms; pull him forward and downward and use your forehead to strike his nose.
7.     **Knee**  
Disorient your opponent by pulling his center of gravity to one side before delivering your knee strike. Hang on to him for balance.

诀曰: 应机而发, 因势而变, 不加思索, 顺手拈来, 不期然而然, 莫知为而为。

Oral Tradition: Spontaneously change and adapt according to your opponent. Do not attempt conscious thinking; perform the proper maneuver at the proper time with no conscious mind-intent or effort; with your conscious mind *un-aware* of its work, free your sub-conscious mind to act naturally, instinctively.

诀曰: 万不可走入招式断续的方法。

Oral Tradition: Do not cultivate sequential patterns of response as methods of solution to the non-static problems of fighting.

诀曰:习之若恒久,不期自然至,变化形无形,周旋意无意。

Oral Tradition: Repetition is the mother of all skills; realistic training is the key to expertise. When internalized as spontaneous reflexes, you will perform the proper action at the proper time with no conscious effort and/or awareness; you will change maneuvers spontaneously (automatically) without being aware of your action. Be versatile, flexible, and form-less; you must switch tactics as required by the situation sub-consciously with no conscious mind-intent.

## Training Guidelines - Summary of Dos and Don'ts

### Dos

In competitive push-hands, you must maintain your own equilibrium while attempt to disturb and control your opponent's balance. To do this, you must protect your central line while simultaneously threatening your opponent's central line. By controlling your opponent's central line, you control his center of gravity. Whatever the contact points are with your opponent (wrist, forearm, etc.,) and wherever the points are (high, low, inside, outside), you should be directing your whole-body balanced-force through the contact points at your opponent's central line. Moreover, attempt to always have at least one attacking element (hand, elbow, shoulder, head, etc.,) threatening and aimed at your opponent's nose, mouth, and throat area. The most effective techniques are direct attacks to the central line; conversely, attacks deflected but a few inches to either side of the central line will be rendered ineffective.

诀曰:守中用中。

Oral Tradition: Protect your central line and attack your opponent's central line.

诀曰:应机而发,因势而变。

You must have a combat mindset and must mentally dominate your opponent; intimidate your opponent. Every move should have a purpose; avoid *rolling* arms in circles without any purpose; aim to disturb your opponent's balance. Keep changing the forces at the contact points. Attach, *stick*, join, and follow. Adapt and change according to your opponent. Get inside his OODA cycle by using different tempo and timing. When the opportunity comes, do not hesitate, openings are fleeting, attack the opening line with sufficient power to defeat/destroy your opponent.

诀曰:有法而练,无意而用。

*Feel (listen)*, sense, or perceive what your opponent is doing and act/react spontaneously, naturally, instinctively, instantaneously, focusing on your mind-intent *un*-consciously. Do not make these exercises into mechanical sequential routines (“if this then that” sequences) and methodical solutions to the dynamic problems of fighting. Keep your wrist joints convex circular a flexible at the contact points.

## Don'ts

The following is an incomplete list of common errors committed in push-hands:

1. Using direct force against incoming force head-on instead of redirecting the incoming force (*Ding*, 顶).
2. Creating absence of touch by disconnecting the contact points (*Diu*, 丢).
3. Collapsing your *frame* and posture resulting in being immobilized, etc., (*Bian*, 匾).
4. Pull directly against a pulling force instead of *sticking* and following and/or adding your force to overwhelm it (*Kang*, 抗).
5. Increasing the speed of revolution of the hands to mask incompetence.
6. Not using your harmonized whole-body to take up power from the ground.

## In Closing

Relax appropriately; keep your touch “sufficient” but light. Do not tense-up and become rigid (*Jiang*, 僵); do not use localized muscle or speed up. Maintain optimal body *alignment* and *connected-ness* to take up power from the ground to your contact points (*Shu Zhan Lian Tong*, 舒展连通, *Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一).

Adhere to the “*three-no-hits*” (*San Bu Da*, 三不打) principles: Do not attack if you cannot hit your target (accurately); do not attack if your strike is not focused (or hard); and do not attack if you cannot put your opponent out of action (defeat your opponent).

While repetition is the mother of all skills; realistic training is the key to any expertise. You acquire practical fighting skills only by actually doing and/or reacting with push-hands and sparring exercises, not from meretricious solo exercises. Push-hands and sparring (using body protection) must be your “*daily bread*”; practice push-hands every day; winning or losing is not

important in training, learning from the experience is. Learn to see Yiquan principles in practice; learn to see what Yiquan tactics look like when translated into actions. During these practices, you must treat your partner as a real opponent; do not hold back. Always follow through with an explosive pushing power release (with maximum force) or with a strike/blow because once you get into the habit of holding back, you will not be able to turn-on your power when you need it.

Push-hands does not replace sparring!

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## Chapter 8: Fighting (*San Shou*, 散手)

# 散手

Practical martial art is fighting, combat, and/or self-defense (*Shi Zhan*, 实战, *Shi Zuo*, 实作, *Ji Ji*, 技击). In combat, both at the highest command level and at the lowest individual level, combatants first *observe* their opponents, *orient* themselves so they can understand the situation, then they make a *decision* to direct their activities, and then they take *action* (OODA cycle - John Boyd).

However, before you can apply self-defense tactics in hand-to-hand fighting, you must possess some basic fighting skills as well as know your own physical limitations and abilities, strengths and weaknesses. *Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril* (*Sun Tsu*, 孙子).

诀曰:应敌知机,方能发动制人,不必度来势之机会,自能揣敌人之短长,均在有意无意之间也。

Oral Tradition: In hand-to-hand fighting, awareness and consideration of engagement opportunities, analysis of opponent's strength and weakness, are all done instinctively and sub-consciously with no conscious mind-intent and/or effort.

诀曰:打法定要先上身,手脚齐到法为真。

Oral Tradition: Every maneuver/technique must become habit, become second nature, become spontaneous reflex before it becomes useful; mind and body must work in synch, motions must flow with no conscious effort, hands and feet must “arrive simultaneously” to be truly effective.

诀曰:待到自动化阶段才能够谈到应用。

Oral Tradition: A maneuver is useful only when it becomes a spontaneous reflex.

诀曰:非至於自动运动之境,不能得力得气得神而入化境。

Oral Tradition: To be useful, the actions of a maneuver must flow with comfortable natural ease, with no conscious effort; your skills must become spontaneous reflexes.

People of different culture and geographical location have developed distinctive styles, and maneuvers/techniques for fighting. Students of Yiquan must keep open minds; adopt and absorb useful techniques and tactics readily.

诀曰:一法不立,无法不容。本拳基服膺,无长不会集。

Oral Tradition: No rules exist precluding the adoption of any useful principle or tactic.

In doing so, you must adhere faithfully to the true (reality based) martial arts principles (*Quan Quan Fu Ying*, 拳拳服膺). Be realistic, practical, and scientific. Remember, *simplicity* is the shortest distance between two points (*Fa Yu Jian*, 法欲简).

诀曰:为何有此一动?

Always ask yourself: *Why do you do what you do?* The “*simplicity of choice*” means that you become effective by being selective; instinctive, natural, sub-conscious, spontaneous movements are the simplest, quickest, and most accurate while conscious choice reaction takes longer. Stop trying to learn everything. If you want to understand a maneuver/technique, take it to the extremes and examine its opposites. Start practicing slowly (*Huan Yun Zhong Jie*, 缓运中解); slow is smooth; smooth is fast. Discard any and all unnecessary flowery extraneous movement and mental distraction.

诀曰:若真正掌握了内在的运动规律,则可随意变更,不受姿势限制。

Oral Tradition: When you have mastered the internal neuromuscular coordination of a maneuver/technique to deliver the balanced-force, you can adapt and refine its external form as desired, without restriction; become form-less.

诀曰:有形练到无形处,练到无形是真功。

Oral Tradition: Practice and develop your maneuver/technique with proper external form; change, adapt, and refine it until it becomes form-less. A maneuver/technique is most effective when it is form-less.

If you have any questions about a maneuver/technique, the answers can usually be found in sparring it out.

In this chapter, we will describe in detail Yiquan's basic *San Shou* (散手) principles, training and conditioning procedures, the on-guard ready stance, and some examples of basic punches and kicks. The essence of fighting tactics will be covered in Chapter 9: Tactics (*Ji Ji Fa*, 技击法).

## Principles

In modern day jargon for teaching/learning of physical skills: Yiquan uses Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) to develop your whole-body harmony, neuromuscular coordination, and physical skills. This is accomplished by modeling and imaging. In modeling, the student correctly, repeatedly imitates or mimics the physical forms and movements of the teacher. In imaging, the student maintains a clear mental picture of what he is to accomplish and repeatedly mentally visualizes performing each maneuver/technique correctly, rehearsing with focused attention and concentration the motions in his mind. Both physical and mental repetitions are needed to program the brain, the nervous system, and the mind-body, to re-pattern your neuromuscular coordination and to develop your motor skills. Repetition is the mother of all skills. Realistic training is the key to expertise.

To be effective in fighting, you must be able to use proper *body mechanics* to put your whole-body into your blows, and achieve *un-conscious* competence to execute the proper move at the proper time spontaneously with no conscious mind-intent (*Zi Dong Yun Dong Zhi Jing*, 自动运动之境), freeing your conscious mind to plan your fight as the situation arises. The “*simplicity of choice*” implies instinctive, natural, sub-conscious, spontaneous movements are the simplest, quickest, and most accurate while conscious choice reaction takes longer. Therefore, you should train to minimize unnecessary conscious choice reactions and select the techniques that work for you carefully and practice them repeatedly until they are second nature to you, until the intentional actions of the technique become habit, until your skills become spontaneous reflexes. The basis of Yiquan is to work with your body's natural response to develop your spontaneous instinctive innate fighting capabilities (*Fa Hui Ben Neng*, 发挥本能). The more a maneuver/technique runs counter to your instinctive natural abilities, the more you have to consciously think about that maneuver/technique in order to accomplish it. It is thus harder for that maneuver/technique to be a spontaneous reflex, to become habit. Training a maneuver/technique that is against your instinctive natural abilities is futile because that training would fail under stress.

诀曰:待到自动化阶段才能够谈到应用。

Oral Tradition: A maneuver is useful only when it becomes a spontaneous reflex.

诀曰:非至於自动运动之境,不能得力得气得神而入化境。

Oral Tradition: To be useful, the intentional actions of a maneuver must become automatic and flow with no conscious mind-intent and/or effort; your skills must become spontaneous reflexes.

诀曰:若真正掌握了内在的运动规律,则可随意变更,不受姿势限制。

Oral Tradition: When you have mastered the internal neuromuscular coordination of a maneuver/technique to deliver the balanced-force, you can change, adapt, and refine its external form as desired, without restriction; become form-less.

诀曰:应机而发,因势而变,不加思索,顺手拈来,不期然而然,莫知为而为。

Oral Tradition: Spontaneously change and adapt according to your opponent. Do not attempt conscious thinking; perform the proper maneuver at the proper time with no conscious mind-intent and/or effort; with your conscious mind *un*-aware of its work, free your sub-conscious mind to act spontaneously and instinctively.

诀曰:有形练到无形处,练到无形是真功。

Oral Tradition: Practice and develop your maneuver/technique with proper external form; change, adapt, and refine it until it becomes form-less. A maneuver/technique is most effective when it is form-less.

诀曰:切不可在招式方法上苦心经营。

Oral Tradition: Do not waste your time on practiced sequential response as solution to the dynamic problem of fighting.

诀曰:要是有了人造的方法参杂其间,可就把万变无穷的本能妙用丢净了。

Oral Tradition: Any preconceived method will interfere with your natural spontaneous instinctive abilities, totally discarding the infinite variety of possible ways to respond to different circumstances.



The following are essential aspects to consider and to explore in your training and conditioning of your basic fighting skills; they are inter-dependent and inseparable; we only isolate them for ease of discussion.

## Combat Mindset (*Yi*, 意)

诀曰: 艺高人胆大, 胆大艺更高。

Oral Tradition: Skills develop courage; courage enhances skills.

诀曰: 对敌无胆向先, 空自眼明手便。

Oral Tradition: Without the willingness and resolve to fight, all your physical abilities and skills are useless.

You must have a fighting mind, a winning attitude. You must develop the courage and desire to fight, and the willingness to aggressively attack your opponent, i.e., to fully commit to your defense and survival. Without the willingness and resolve to use the fighting skills, the skills really do not exist.

First, it helps to do “*self-enlargement*” (*Zi Wo Fang Da*, 自我放大), visualize yourself as a giant when compared to your opponents, to build courage.

Second, use imaging/visualization (mind-intent, *Yi*, 意) to control fear, manage stress, and establish *un*-conscious decision-making reference points for a planned spontaneous response and control your “loss of discipline”. By mentally visualizing various attacks and appropriate solutions ahead of time using mental movies and crisis rehearsals, you develop *un*-conscious decision-making reference points, and you are less likely to freeze when startled or confronted with violence. This drastically reduces the lag time for your instinctive response to changing circumstances, and allows you to react spontaneously in an infinite variety of ways.

You must cultivate the mental state to fully commit to your defense and survival: courage, confidence, and will to win. This is your *combat mindset*. Then, do the unexpected; seize the initiative; control the engagement opportunities; move decisively and strike with precision and explosive maximum power with your whole-body behind your blows. You must project this mental attitude to dominate your opponent (*Qi Shi*, 气势).

Let's revisit the Yiquan techniques for developing this combat mindset:

1. When practicing relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩), mentally enlarge yourself (*Zi Wo Fang Da*, 自我放大); visualize yourself as a giant. You should feel like a triton among minnows. Build up your courage, confidence, resolve, and will to win.
2. When practicing fighting postures (*Ji Ji Zhuang*, 技击桩), visualize being attacked by imaginary opponents (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌) from different angles, directions, and with various maneuvers. Mentally rehearse executing different techniques *successfully* to defeat/neutralize/counter these attacks. Always send a *positive* image to the brain to reinforce the coding to recruit the proper muscle contraction sequence. Negative thoughts impede focus.
3. Visualize sparring with imaginary opponents (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌) when doing solo trial-and-feel (*Dan Cao Shou*, 单操手) and shadow boxing (*Ji Ying*, 击影) exercises.

诀曰：畏心存则侮，怯敌者必败。

In essence, if you have doubts about winning, you will not win. Harmony of action and force are prerequisites for victory; mind and body must work in synch; the intentional movement of maneuvers must flow with no conscious effort, they must become spontaneous reflexes.

诀曰：取胜四梢均要齐，不胜必有怀疑心。

Oral Tradition: Harmony of actions (hands and feet arriving simultaneously) is necessary for victory. If you have doubts of your abilities, you will not win.

诀曰：平时练习如临大敌之象，交手时有人若无人之境。

NOTES: Without a firm foundation in Yiquan basic skills and whole-body harmony, *crisis rehearsal* training and conditioning is self-delusion. When grounded in proficiency in relaxed-standing, trial-and-feel, footwork, power release, push-hands, and sparring (*San Shou*, 散手), it is mental preparation for combat. When practicing (solo) without an opponent, you should mentally rehearse sparring with imaginary ones (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌). You must match your will and resolve to your skills. Then, in a real encounter, you can rely on your *un-conscious* competence; have the confidence to win; execute the proper techniques at the proper time spontaneously as if there is no opponent.

As in all forms of combat, the tactical mental states of a hand-to-hand conflict/confrontation sub-consciously use the OODA cycle (John Boyd):

1. *Observe:* Perceive, Analyze,
2. *Orient:* Situational Awareness, Understand the Situation, Preparation,
3. *Decision:* Fight-or-flight, and
4. *Act.*

At close quarter fighting ranges, if your opponent initiates an attack and you have to see what your opponent is doing (*observe*), understand it (*orient*), and then *decide* to put your motor skills to work (*act*), you will most likely be defeated. It is impossible for the average person to consciously perform this sequential pattern of response in the compressed time frame of hand-to-hand fighting. Your conscious brain simply cannot keep up with the speed of the information processing necessary for close quarter fighting. You have to relegate this to your powerful *un*-conscious mind.

诀曰:若以目之所见,一再思察,然后出手以应敌,鲜有不败者。

Oral Tradition: If you use conscious procedural thinking (sequential processing) to observe, analyze, and then decide and react, you will lose most of your hand-to-hand encounters or confrontations.

诀曰:有意而练,无意而用。

Instead, you should let your *un*-conscious mind draw on established decision-making reference points, to use the proper actions at the proper time spontaneously without conscious mind-intent (*Bu Qi Zi Ran Zhi*, 不期自然至). The proper timing, angle, distance, reflexive response, and courage to win can only be acquired and cultivated through actual experience in sparring.

诀曰:若能出手而得已发未发时机之扼要,则非久经实作之惯手难能得也。

Oral Tradition: Push-hands and sparring practices are the most direct paths to gain real fighting experiences. Mastery of timing, angle, distance, and control of engagement opportunities come from prolong diligent push-hands and sparring practices.

If you have any questions concerning a maneuver/technique, the answers can usually be found in sparring it out (*Shi Zhan Ti Yan*, 实战体验). You should view every sparring exercise as a learning opportunity; learn from your defeats and victories; do not let the outcome affect your quest for knowledge and skill. Do not be physically or mentally distracted. Free your mind-body to strike spontaneously and instinctively with no reservation. Always use maximum effort.

Never hold back because once you get into the habit of holding back, you will not be able to “turn-on” your power when you need it.

诀曰：犹如鹰鹞下鸡场。

Oral Tradition: Be like an eagle in a chicken farm, attack without hesitation/reservation.

Once a hand-to-hand confrontation is underway, let your mind-body be totally in the present; be *in the zone*; let your mind-body work in synch so movements flow with no conscious effort. Negative thoughts are impediment to focusing on the present. Take command of your “internal monologue” (*Fan Guan Nei Shi*, 反观内视), focus on the present; replace negative chatter with positive self-talk. The actual performance of a maneuver or technique in a conflict/confrontation depends on the actions of your opponent, which cannot be predicted. Thus, do not anticipate the outcome of the encounter and do not admire your work.

诀曰：手足齐到定要赢。

Oral Tradition: Stride for simultaneity and harmony; hands and feet must arrive simultaneously; cultivate the courage and confidence to win.

## Whole-Body Harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调)

Yiquan is a mind-body training and conditioning system. Relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) re-patterns and synthesizes your mind-body into a highly coordinated unified whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调) state in which all your body elements are optimally *connected* and *aligned* (*Chu Chu Lian Guan Xiang Tong*, 处处连贯相通) to react as a spring-like coordinated whole-body (*Wu Dian Bu Dan Huang*, 无点不弹簧).

诀曰：一动无不动，一动全身转。

If one element moves, every element moves in unison, every movement involve the coordinated motions of hands, feet, torso, and mind. Every element contains rotational components: *drill* legs, pivot torso, and twist arms. Clean, crisp, explosive power release requires moving each link in the proper concurrent overlapping sequence with the proper timing to discharge the maximum balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). The *motionless-movement* and the trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercises, through relaxation/tension exchanges (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) and kinesthetic perception of isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Zheng Li*, 争力), develop this balanced-force. The objective is to make every part of your body elastic and spring-like, make movement flows with no conscious effort, capable of discharging/releasing explosive power on

contact (*De Li*, 得力) at will. Relaxed-standing is the foundation for developing this whole-body mechanics to deliver the multiple-direction balanced-force.

诀曰:遍体无点不弹簧。

Oral Tradition: Use appropriate relaxation and tension exchanges to develop your whole-body so every element possesses spring-like elastic reflexes.

The capability of discharging/releasing explosive power (*Bao Fa Li*, 爆发力) on contact (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发) depends on the foundation of your basic skills (*Ji Ben Gong*, 基本功). Without a good foundation in relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩), trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力), footwork (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步), and power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力), fighting (*Shi Zhan San Shou*, 实战散手) training and conditioning is ineffective. Conversely, it is absolutely necessary to practice sparring with *San Shou* (散手) maneuvers/techniques to develop your confrontation response abilities: proper timing, angle, distance, speed, strength, and endurance; realistic training is the key to any expertise. It comes down to having the proper *body mechanics* to deliver the multiple-direction balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) behind all your blows, being able to release power on contact explosively, and to control your equilibrium, *centered-ness*, and *level-ness* (*Zhong Ping*, 中平). Power discharge/release must retain neutrality in commitment; it must not have an absolute direction to avoid being exploited by your opponent (*Li Bu Chu Jian*, 力不出尖). Although there is a primary force direction at the release when you tense your whole-body, internal opposing-force-pairs with other parts of the body maintain your balance and stability (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争); by this action any part of your body could be the power discharge/release point.

诀曰:力从地起,整体连通一贯。

Oral Tradition: Take up power from the ground; merge all force components as one. Propelling your blows and hit with your *connected* and *aligned* whole-body.

诀曰:浑身气力匀整,全身力一。

Oral Tradition: Use proper body mechanics by maintaining appropriate relaxation, tension, and equilibrium. Merge your whole-body forces as one.

## Unified Offense and Defense (*Gong Shou He Yi*, 攻守合一)

Practical fighting techniques (*San Shou*, 散手) consist of offense and defense elements. You must never separate these. Yiquan emphasizes unifying offense and defense; there is no pure offense or pure defense moves.

诀曰：攻守合一。

Oral Tradition: Offense and defense must be integrated as one.

**Example:** Use your rear guard hand (parry hand) to complement your lead hand to make an attack a defensive offense. Use your rear guard hand for most of your parrying and guarding. When striking with the lead hand, the guard hand should be held high to offset any counter. When one hand is out, the other should be either immobilizing your opponent, withdrawing for protection, or to secure a position for a follow-up blow. After shooting out your lead hand, cultivate the habit of immediately returning it along the same path; keep it high for any possible counters.

诀曰：双手齐出，单手独进。

Oral Tradition: Simultaneously advance both hands, make one hand substantial to attack and make the other insubstantial to defense.

All passive “defense only” techniques, which parry, block, and/or evade attacks, are ineffective; you cannot parry, block, and evade forever; no one is evasive enough to avoid being hit in a fight. Evasive slips, ducks, bobs and weaves should remove you from the line of force and put you in range and in a position to counter. Do not practice any evasive maneuver without a “riposte”. You must have the courage to exchange punches with your opponent; the result of afraid of being hit is being hit. By keeping your fighting ready stance *frame/structure* (*Jian Jia*, 肩架) intact and rolling with opponents’ punches by presenting changing body planes (*Shen Fa Bian Hua*, 身法变化) during an encounter, you will be able to withstand and sustain some hits.

诀曰：攻防均要在他旧力略过新力未生时。

Oral Tradition: Attack your opponent as he switches between techniques in a complex maneuver or as he switches lead.

In theory, synthesizing offense and defense elements into one (*Gong Shou He Yi*, 攻守合一) decreases the distance and increases the speed of your response. This strategy opens up the window of opportunity because your opponent is vulnerable when he is preparing to launch an attack after a failed attempt (旧力略过新力未生时) or when he is between maneuvers, such as switching leads. Since your opponent exposes more of his weaknesses during an attack i.e., when he is fully committed to a maneuver (*Jiu Li Lue Guo*, 旧力略过), by combining your counter attack with your defense as one (*Gong Shou He Yi*, 攻守合一), by making attack and defense simultaneous, you increase your chances of landing your blows. Know and use your opponent's rhythm and timing (his fighting beat/cadence) to your advantage (*Zhi Pai Ren Jun Dou*, 知拍任君斗). As for distance, you can hit him when he can hit you. Use slips, ducks, or bobs and weaves to evade attacks without moving out of range for your counter. Coordinate your

offense and defense; when one hand is attacking, the other should be defending and/or securing a position for a follow-up. Make it a habit to keep the rear hand high to protect your head and the rear elbow articulate to protect your ribs. Do not “*telegraph*” any punch. Do not waste your energy missing.

诀曰：前手打人，后手用力。

Oral Tradition: When striking with your lead hand, also maintain focus your on rear hand.

### Central Line (*Shou Zhong Xian*, 守中线)

诀曰：两手结合，迎面伸出，前伸后撤，左右封固，务须守着中线。

All attacks will be neutralized when deflected several inches laterally from your central line (*Shou Zhong*, 守中). Conversely, your attacks are much more effective if they connect on targets on your opponent's central line (*Yong Zhong*, 用中).

诀曰：守中用中。

Oral Tradition: Guard your central line; attack your opponent's central line.

诀曰：动静处中，能守能用。

Hit as straight as possible (*Li Zhi*, 力直); maintain your curved form (*Xing Qu*, 形曲, e.g., do not straighten or lock your elbows and knees); step in with your punch to use inertia/momentum (*Dong Dang*, 动荡) to add power and to make your reach good. The path of a punch may cover more than 10 feet (with stepping); but its power delivery is effective only within several inches.

诀曰：不必远求尚美观，只在眼前寸间变。

Oral Tradition: To be effective, make your motions as small as possible. Your strikes should be felt before it is seen.

诀曰：拳打丈外不为远，近者只在一寸中。

Oral Tradition: Long punches may cover more then ten feet but short ones may be delivered within an inch.

诀曰：拳打寸劲。

Oral Tradition: Develop the ability to explosively discharge/release the force of a punch/strike with minimum (inches) movement.

In an encounter, whether advancing or retreating, always keep your hands/feet moving (脚无定位, 身无定势); always point at least one weapon (hand, elbow, etc.) at your opponent's throat/nose area to threaten him to keep him on edge. Initiate change and control engagement opportunities. Keep your body slightly bladed at an angle to minimize your own target area; face your opponent squarely to attack with both hands.

诀曰: 正面微转即斜面, 斜面迎击正可摧。

Oral Tradition: Twist your torso to switch from being squared to being angled (bladed) to your opponent and vice versa. Angled (bladed) posture minimizes your exposure to an attack and put you in position to defend and to counter while squared facing posture let you use both hands in an all out vicious attack.

Make use of every engagement opportunity; be able to hit from every angle. Each blow should set-up the next. Let your body use its spontaneous *confrontation response* abilities acquired from training and conditioning to direct your strikes and power discharges/releases towards your opponent's central line (*Yong Zhong*, 用中). Develop speed, accuracy, timing, angle, and judgment of distance with sparring; Yiquan *San Shou* (散手) can be learned only by physically doing it.

诀曰: 一触即发, 一发即止。

Oral Tradition: Explode on contact and immediately recover for a follow-up.

Start and finish your maneuver as quickly as possible, and return to your on-guard posture immediately.

## Real and Maximum Effort (*Yao Yong Quan Li*, 要用全力)

Always hit confidently and hard with full power. Learn to perform at your maximum effort at all times, do not coast along with the idea that you can “*open-up*” when the time comes. If the punches are pulled, they lose their essence. Nothing is more dangerous than a “*half-hearted*” attack; concentrate on correct and determined execution of your offense, be totally in the present, be “*in the zone*”; with mind and body working in synch, your movement flows with no conscious effort to deliver maximum power (*Bu Jue Li Zhi Li*, 不觉力之力). Let your opponent graze your skin and you fracture his bones.



诀曰:手足齐到定要赢。

Oral Tradition: Stride for simultaneity; hands and feet must arrive simultaneously; cultivate the courage, resolve, and confidence to win.

Keep your practice/training/conditioning reality based, perceive and response to your sparring partner's attacks; realistic training/conditioning is the key to any expertise. Whether practicing push-hands or sparring, do not merely go through the motion; do not turn them into pre-arranged methodical routines ("if this then that"). Avoid doing methodical routine as response or solution to a "combat problem". Concentrate, feel, and use maximum effort (not brute strength) in every execution to train and condition your neuromuscular coordination. Perfect practice makes perfect. You must treat your practice partner as an opponent; if you loaf and just let your hands go around you are wasting your time. Remember: You fight as you trained.

Train to hit with full force for the full reach, never pull your punches. Take up power from the ground by pushing off with your feet (*Li Cong Di Qi*, 力从地起); maintain whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调), *alignment*, and *connected-ness* (*Lian Guan Xiang Tong*, 连贯相通) to transmit the force from pushing off the ground.

诀曰:起是钻,落是翻,出手如钢锉,回手似勾杆。

Use whole-body pivot, *drill* your legs, turn your torso and twist your arms (多面螺旋); every element contains helical spiral movement, rotating as it goes out and as it returns (出入螺旋式). If one element moves, every element (and mind) moves in unison. Make up your mind to hit as hard as possible with every ounce of your bodily strength and mental determination. Deliver explosive power discharge/release with whip-like (snapping) action. Keep all your joints loose/flexible (elastic); relaxed initiation is essential for fast and powerful strikes.

When punching, loosely close your hands as if holding eggs (*Xu Wo*, 虚握). Let your punch shoot out loosely and easily, do not tighten or focus until the moment of impact. On contact, sharply rotate your forearm a quarter turn, focus your whole-body (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发), tense your hands as if crushing the eggs, twist and snap your wrist downward slightly so the back of your hand and forearm are straight. The punch should increase in speed (accelerate) throughout its run and when it lands, still have enough momentum and power to drive clear through your target. Immediately relax your whole body; snap your attacking arm back to your on-guard position to be ready for follow-up blows (*Yi Fa Ji Zhi*, 一发即止).

诀曰:用拳须透爪,用掌要有气。

When focusing your punch (*Yong Quan*, 用拳), visualize clenching your fist so tightly that your fingernails penetrate your palms (*Tou Zhao*, 透爪). When striking with your open hand (*Yong Zhang*, 用掌), push your palm heel outwards for a tense focus (*You Qi*, 有气). All blows should

end with a “snap” several inches behind your target; you must strike through your opponent instead of just striking at him.

## Spontaneous Reflex (*Zi Dong Hua*, 自动化)

诀曰:非至於自动运动之境,不能得力得气得神而入化境。

The principle of “*simplicity of choice*” implies instinctive, natural, sub-conscious, spontaneous movements are the simplest, quickest, and the most accurate while conscious choice reaction takes longer. Therefore, before you can use a maneuver/technique, it must become second nature, become spontaneous reflex, and be made into a habit.

诀曰:待到自动化阶段才能够谈到应用。

There are no instant habits; it takes time to make a maneuver into a habit; you must practice constantly to develop it. The more a maneuver/technique runs counter to your instinctive natural innate abilities, the more you have to think about that maneuver/technique in order to accomplish it. It is therefore harder for that particular maneuver to become a habit. Thus, training a maneuver/technique that is against your instinctive natural abilities is futile because that training would fail under stress.

诀曰:打法定要先上身,手脚齐到法为真。

Oral Tradition: Every maneuver/technique must become second nature, become habit, before it becomes useful; hands and feet must arrive simultaneously, skills must become spontaneous reflexes to be truly effective.

Yiquan training and conditioning emphasizes mental visualization, kinesthetic perception, and *feel* (*Yi Gan*, 意感). Explore, perceive, experiment, look inwards, feel your body, read your muscles, and learn from kinesthetic experience of your mind-body (*Ti Ren*, 体认) to develop your instinctive natural innate abilities (*Fa Hui Ben Neng*, 发挥本能). Do not merely seek or imitate physical form resemblance (*Bu Qiu Xing Hai Si*, 不求形骸似), you must comprehend the essence of the maneuver, learn what you need to practice, develop the neuromuscular coordination, learn the mental aspects of the focused concentration (*Dan Qiu Shen Yi Zu*, 但求神意足), and practice what you have learned. Let your mind-body work in synch so movement flows with no conscious effort. Do not “fix your movement” in one single way. By adhering to the Yiquan principles faithfully means that you must make them your habit, do not forget them during practice and in your daily life. Do not forget yet do not assist in its growth (*Wu Wang Wu Zhu*, 勿忘勿助), just keeping them in your mind, once acquired, do not be overly conscious of them, that is, instead of trying to conform to these principles, pretend that you have mastered them.

诀曰:力量在身外去求取,意念在无心中操持。

Oral Tradition: Attempt to manipulate your mind-intent and visualization sub-consciously with no conscious mind-intent; operate between conscious-ness and sub-conscious-ness as if nothing critical is happening.

During a fight or hand-to-hand conflict, there is no time for procedural thinking with your conscious mind. It is impossible for the average person to consciously perform the OODA response sequence in the compressed time frame. Your conscious brain simply cannot keep up with the speed of the information processing. Your reflexes must be *un*-conscious, spontaneous, instinctive, instantaneous, and automatic. This *un*-conscious competence (automatic, spontaneous, *un*-conscious response ability) can only come about from lots of mental rehearsal and repetitive trial-and-feel practice to ingrain the neuromuscular coordination so the movement is no longer conscious. It becomes second nature; it becomes habit; it flows with no conscious effort. It takes time and effort, several hundred thousand mental and physical repetitions of an action is needed before it becomes an automatic *un*-conscious response, establishing your *un*-conscious decision-making reference. Repetition is the mother of all skills. You must use your mind-intent (visualize with focused concentration) as well as actual physical maneuver to practice Yiquan. Coordination of mind and body is the secret of success. Your brain must interact with the neural transmitters, sensors, and muscles to create, encode, and ingrain your neuromuscular coordination; explore/nurture the path-of-force-propagation of each maneuver/technique (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路). Think and practice. Practice and think. You need repeated exposure; you must re-learn a lesson multiple times to internalize it. Initially, practice slowly; slow is smooth; smooth is fast.

诀曰:较技者不可思悟,思悟者寸步难行。

Oral Tradition: In hand-to-hand fighting, do not attempt procedural thinking (serial processing) with your conscious mind to create sequential pattern ("if this then that") as solution.

Initially, let your mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) lead/direct/guide your balanced-force (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力); relax your antagonistic muscles and do not use any brute strength (*Yong Yi Bu Yong Li*, 用意不用力). If you practice correctly, your balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) and mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) will *arrive* at your intended body position simultaneously (*Yi Dao Li Dao*, 意到力到). And at a more advanced level, your mind-intent and balanced-force becomes inseparable, indistinguishable (*Yi Li Bu Fen*, 意力不分). The balanced-force will go to wherever your mind-intent directs.

You should make it a habit to:

1. Fight from your center (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争). Always be in position, and in balance (on the move) to strike and hit with your balanced-force behind each blow (*Sui Shi Fa Li*, 随时发力). Always strike through the target, but don't over shoot your target.
2. After hitting, instantly withdraw your attacking limb to assume the on-guard position for follow-up (*Yi Fa Ji Zhi*, 一发即止). Ending a series of strikes with your lead hand let you return quickly to your on-guard position.
3. When striking with one limb, retract the other to add power and to provide a rear guard (*Gong Shou He Yi*, 攻守合一).

In a hand-to-hand conflict/confrontation, do not attempt procedural thinking (serial processing with your conscious mind). *Observe*, feel, and perceive what your opponent is doing and *act/react* spontaneously, instinctively, and automatically (i.e., use parallel processing with your *un-conscious* mind). In a compressed time frame, your action/reaction is best relegated to your powerful *un-conscious* mind. You make sub-conscious *decisions* based on what you perceive, how you *orient* that perception and the time allowed. You must free yourself to apply the skill, knowledge, training, and experience learned in sparring practice and crisis rehearsal (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌) as *un-conscious* decision-making reference points: reacting spontaneously, instinctively, making the proper moves without conscious thinking, relegating your actions to your *un-conscious* mind to overcome your loss of discipline under stress. You fight as you trained; realistic practice is the key to any expertise. *Method-less-ness* (*Quan Wu Quan*, 拳无拳) and *empty-minded-ness* (*Yi Wu Yi*, 意无意) induce *form-less-ness* (*Xing Wu Xing*, 形无形) and the utmost freedom to spontaneously respond to different circumstances in an infinite variety of ways.

诀曰:有形练到无形处,练到无形是真功。

Oral Tradition: Practice and develop your maneuver/technique with proper external form; change, adapt, and refine it until it becomes form-less. A maneuver/technique is most effective when it is form-less.

诀曰:若真正掌握了内在的运动规律,则可随意变更,不受姿势限制。

Oral Tradition: When you have mastered the internal neuromuscular coordination of a maneuver/technique to deliver the balanced-force, you can change, adapt, and refine its external form as desired, without restriction, become form-less.

With all training and technique “*forgotten*”, with the mind un-aware of its work, free your powerful sub-conscious mind to handle the situation, make the proper move at the proper time

spontaneously without conscious intent. Do not make a conflict/confrontation into a static sequential pattern and then invent a methodical procedural solution (“if this then that”). Fighting is dynamic, never static, and is always unpredictable.

诀曰：应机而发，因势而变，不加思索，顺手拈来，不期然而然，莫知为而为。

Oral Tradition: Do not attempt conscious thinking. Perform the proper maneuver at the proper time spontaneously without conscious mind-intent; with your conscious mind unaware of its work, free your *un*-conscious mind to act instinctively.

诀曰：拳无拳，意无意，无拳无意是真义。

Oral Tradition: Method becomes “no-method”, intent becomes “no-intent”, “no-method” and “no-intent” is the true principle.

诀曰：有形有意都是假，技到无心始见奇。

Oral Tradition: Retaining form and mind-intent in fighting is false, fighting only becomes art when form-less-ness and empty-minded-ness is achieved.

Every one of these aspects must be “*internalized*” into your fighting maneuvers/techniques. In the next section, we will describe and explore the requirements of the on-guard ready stance, the footwork, and basic maneuvers/techniques for *San Shou* (散手).

## Methods and Procedures

### Ready Stance

Yiquan’s on-guard or the ready stance for fighting is very similar to the *Holding-the-birds* posture (*Niao Nan Fei Zhuang*, 鸟难飞桩). In combat, you should keep your strong side up front, your hands in constant subtle neutral motion, and use footwork to engage your opponent (*Shen Wu Ding Xing*, 身无定形, *Bu Wu Ding Wei*, 步无定位). Your lead arm and leg are the main offensive weapons because of their advanced position. However, you should be able to strike from all angles with either hand or leg from wherever the hand or leg happens to be at the moment. Openings are fleeting.

The essential functions of the on-guard ready stance are:

1. To place the body in the optimal posture and position for the next move,
2. To enable you to deceive your opponent by hiding your intention (*Yi Bu You Xiang*, 意不有像), reach, strength and weakness, etc.,
3. To maintain comfortable natural ease and relaxation for quick spontaneous reflex action and smooth coordinated movement, and
4. To prevent your opponent from landing decisive blows.

诀曰:骨骼毛发都要支撑, 迺放争敛互为。

The proper on-guard ready stance thus demands simple and effective mental and physical organization. Be natural, comfortable, and relaxed; do not be rigid, tensed, or mentally and physically lax (*Song Er Bu Xie*, 松而不懈, *Jin Er Bu Jiang*, 紧而不僵). Maintain a mild vertical elongation on your spine, with the chin slightly tuck-in. Visualize sitting on a high stool with a string attached and pulling your head upwards, the muscles and bones structure are in optimal *alignment* to provide skeletal support without being rigid; all joints are slightly bent, flexible, and not locked (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直). Keep your arms up in on-guard position; the shoulders are down and loose (*Chen Jian*, 沉肩); prop your elbows out (*Jian Cheng Zhou Heng*, 肩撑肘横) yet articulate to protect your sides (*Zhui Zhou*, 坠肘); hands almost closed as if holding eggs (*Xu Wo*, 虚握). The entire arm and shoulder must be loose and relaxed so that you can snap out a strike (*Heng Cheng Shu Bao*, 横撑竖抱); drive all your strikes from your core (*Gen Jie Cui Dong*, 根节催动). Use simple neutral movement with no strain and no commitment in direction to keep the hands in some subtle neutral motion for easier initiation but always retain cover. The hand position changes frequently in circular weaving motion from the low back fist position (no lower than navel level) to about nose height (no higher than eyebrow level) and as far out to the outside of the shoulder. Do not cross your left hand over your central line to your right; do not cross your right hand over your central line to your left. Avoid any extended lead to keep the potential of your reach a secret; an extended hand offers itself for immobilization.

诀曰:两足重量,前三后七,用时颠倒互换。

It is natural to “coil” slightly to lower your center of gravity (semi-crouch). However, do not lean forward presenting your head as a target or lean backward compromising your stability. Distribute your weight 30% on your lead leg and 70% on your rear leg. If too much weight is on your lead foot, it will be necessary to transfer that weight before starting the attack. Shift your weight slightly towards the balls of your feet i.e., do not have much weight on your heels but do not lift your heels off the ground (*Zu Gen Wei Xu*, 足跟为虚), feel the ground with the balls of both feet, legs act like springs. Maintain the isometric-opposing-force-pairs between your front

knee and rear hip, between your head and your feet, between your wrists, and between your wrists and your neck. Always leave the space of a natural step between your feet. Springiness and alertness of footwork keeps you flexible and ready to shift your weight from one leg to the other to hit or to kick. The short small step and the glide (wading and skating step), as contrasted with the jump and hop, are used to keep control of your equilibrium (balance). Always, seek good equilibrium (balance) in motion to provide stability.

诀曰:遍体无点不弹簧。

NOTES: If the lead foot and leg are turned inward, the body rotates in the same direction presenting a narrower target. However, rotating the lead foot and leg outward, squaring the body toward your opponent (larger target) lends itself better to attacking with the rear hand.

诀曰:正面微转即斜面,斜面迎击正可摧。

Oral Tradition: Twist your torso to switch from being squared to being angled (bladed) to your opponent and vice versa. Angled (bladed) posture minimizes your exposure to an attack and put you in position to defend and to counter while squared facing posture let you use both hands in an all out vicious attack.

诀曰:拳无定法,身无定形,步无定位,有意应空。

Keep all body joints larger than 90 degrees and smaller than 180 degrees (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直), i.e., never lock any joints (straight or at 180 degrees), you are never set or tensed. Your entire body is in a state of neutral movement, nothing stand still, all is in flux, always re-positioning to adapt to your opponent. By constantly being in small neutral motion, you can initiate a movement faster than from a static position. Keep perfect control of your balance in motion; be ready to release power explosively on contact. Deliver straight/balanced-force from curved (not straight) form. Do not punch beyond your front toe, use small and rapid steps for speed and controlled balance in bridging the gap to your opponent.

Evoke your “*confrontation response*”; be like a lion stalking its prey. Stand with relaxed comfortable *natural ease*, proper *alignment* and *connected-ness* (*Shu Zhan Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 舒展连通一贯). Natural-ness means loosely, comfortably so all muscles can act with the greatest speed and ease without tension (遍体无点不弹簧). Remember to synthesize attack and defense; when attacking with one hand, guard with the other; always maintain your posture to coordinate the actions of both hands. For attack, shift your center of gravity imperceptibly to the front foot to allow the back leg the freedom for the fastest lunge. For defense, shift your center of gravity slightly to your rear foot to increase the distance to allow more time for the parry. Practice instantaneous explosive power discharge/release from the on-guard position, retaining neutral commitment and balance, and return to the on-guard position in one smooth flow.

诀曰:形不破体,意不有像,力不出尖。

Oral Tradition: Do not compromise your form (frame) and structure integrity. Do not show your intention. Do not use force with absolute direction (commitment).

## Footwork (*Zou Bu*, 走步)

A good fighter must have good footwork. Good footwork can beat an attack. Footwork is used for securing the *fighting measure* (distance *interval*), for evasion, for deception, for defense, for conserving energy, and for creating openings. Good footwork is as natural and easy as walking, is performed with comfortable ease, with aliveness, with naturalness, with instinctive pacing, and with correct placement of the body. It provides equilibrium in motion (stability), the ability to take up power from the ground, and the capability to evade attacks.

Wading step (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步) is the foundation of Yiquan footwork. All stepping are based on the wading step. You must feel with your footwork; feel the ground with the balls of your feet as though they were pressing on strong springs. By not putting too much weight on your heels, you provide “*spring*” in your legs to be ready to accelerate or retard your movement as required by changing conditions.

诀曰:两足重量三七互换,脚无定位,身无定势。

At all times keep perfect control of your balance to provide stability; you must be able to maintain equilibrium while constantly shifting your body weight within the middle third of your step (两足重量三七互换). Be constantly on the move to make your opponent misjudge his distance while being aware of your own (*Jiao Wu Ding Wei*, 脚无定位, *Shen Wu Ding Shi*, 身无定势).

Rapid, natural, comfortable, and easy footwork is a matter of correct distribution of weight. The most difficult aspect of hand-to-hand fighting is the development of a *feel* for the proper “*fighting measure*” between you and your opponent – the distance *interval* that you cannot be hit unless he lunges fully at you. You want to position yourself at a distance such that if your opponent attacks, his strikes either just miss or are glancing blows. Yet you are in a position, with a short advance, to counter. If you control this *interval*, you control the engagement opportunities and the fight. The only way to develop this *feel* of the correct *fighting measure* is by practicing push-hands and sparring. You can develop this instinctive sense of distance only if you have a firm foundation in basic skills and can move about smoothly and speedily with comfortable natural ease. Proper footwork allows you to maintain your equilibrium and adjust the *interval* and angle from your opponent. You must practice footwork until it becomes spontaneous reflex and is as natural as walking.

诀曰:上欲动下自随,下欲动上自领,上下动中间攻,中间攻上下合,内外相连,前后左右相应而动。



Oral Tradition: When moving your upper body, your footwork should follow and carry you automatically; when moving your lower body, your upper body should lead spontaneously; when your upper and lower body combines, you are attacking with the middle; when you attack with your middle, your upper and lower bodies are in harmony.

诀曰:步不快则拳慢,步不稳则拳乱。

Oral Tradition: Slow footwork limits the speed of your attacks (punches); unstable footwork makes your attacks (punches) chaotic.

诀曰:进头进手须进身,身手齐到法为真。

*Simultaneity* means: Whenever you move, your whole-body must move in unison; we describe this as mind-intent, head, hands, and feet “*arriving simultaneously*”. This is especially essential for the final approach to get the correct distance to deliver a blow. Use inertia/momentum generated by movement (*Dong Dang*, 动荡) to add power to your strikes.

诀曰:步踏中门钻入重心夺敌位,即是神手亦难防。

We emphasize: Mobility and speed of footwork precede speed of punches and kicks. Find firmness (rooted-ness and stability) in motion with natural comfortable easy and *alive* footwork. Use controlled balance in motion; regulate (matching) the length of your step (forward and backward) to that of your opponent's while keeping just out of distance without moving out of range to immediately take an opening. Openings are fleeting. Notice your opponent's footwork pattern and vary the length and speed of your own step. When possible occupy your opponent's center gate (*Zhong Men*, 中门) - the center position between his legs - to attack.

Yiquan uses small rapid stepping footwork to keep perfect balance, exact distance, and the ability to apply sudden attacks. Jumping, hopping or leaping seems faster and more agile but they waste energy and sacrifice control. To retain your effective fighting posture while stepping, keep your balance at all times (the feet must always be directly under the body); be comfortable and natural as walking; be ready to make use of any engagement opportunity. Footwork should be comfortable, natural, easy, relaxed, and *alive*, the feet are kept a comfortable distance apart without any strain or awkwardness. Move at the right time and be in the best position for attack means balance in movement, always having the feet in the correct position to take up power from the ground (*Sui Shi Fa Li*, 随时发力). Practice free-step (*Huo Bu*, 活步) footwork by itself and in combination with hand and leg techniques. Aim for simplicity with a minimum of movement to add to speed by moving just enough to evade your opponent's attack while making him commit fully to expose his opening.

NOTES: Review all the practical footwork described in Chapter 5: Footwork.

诀曰:应敌知机,方能发动制人,不必度来势之机会,自能揣敌人之短长,均在有意无意之间也。

**Oral Tradition:** In hand-to-hand fighting, awareness and consideration of engagement opportunities are vital for initiating your action; however, analysis of your opponent's strength and weakness should be done instinctively and sub-consciously with no conscious mind-intent and/or effort.

**NOTES:** Sparring (*Shi Zhan*, 实战) and push-hands (*Tui Shou*, 推手) with a partner are the best ways to get a *feel* of your *fighting measure*; you may use “*touch sparring*” (*Qiang Bu*, 抢步) footwork exercises to train without using protective equipment. If you have questions concerning a maneuver/technique, the answers can usually be found in sparring it out.

**Definition:** For exploring and discussing *San Shou* (散手) maneuvers/techniques, let us define three *fighting intervals*:

1. The *far interval* is the long-range non-contact distance from which you and your opponent cannot strike each other - out of distance.
2. The *strike interval* is the medium range distance that you and your opponent can strike one another with your full-length arms and feet weapons (out-fighting). This is your “first strike circle” - within your *fighting measure*.
3. The *body-to-body interval* is the close range distance when your opponent is inside your “first strike circle”. Your full-length arms and feet weapons are impractical, too long to strike in this close range; you must switch to short punches, elbows, knees, hips and head (in-fighting).

## Basic Practical Maneuvers/techniques

In this section, we will describe some examples of *San Shou* (散手) maneuvers and techniques; specifically, Yiquan's basic punches and kicks and their variations.

### A. Punches

When fighting, never hold your hands rigid and/or motionless; keep your hands slightly moving in a threatening manner to keep your opponent on edge. Besides, you can deliver a punch faster from motion than from immobility. Do not “*telegraph*” your punches (*You Yi Wu Lou Xing*, 有意勿露形). Deliver your punch from your ready stance without any added motion and finish

again in the ready stance. There should be no wasted motions and no give-away movements preceding the punch, the punch should be felt and should not be seen.

诀曰:拳打丈外不为远,近者只在一寸中。

Oral Tradition: Your strikes should be felt before it is seen. Long punches may cover more than ten feet but short ones may be delivered within an inch.

诀曰:拳打寸劲。

Oral Tradition: Develop the ability to explosively discharge/release the force of a punch or strike with minimum (only inches of) movement.

诀曰:一动无不动,一动全身转。

Always hit with your whole-body behind your blow by throwing the punch from the center (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争). Power is obtained by: pushing off the ground, shifting the weight, and pivoting the hips and shoulders before the punch reaches the vertical plane containing the central line of the body. A relaxed harmonized whole-body is essential for a fast powerful punch, let your punch shoot out loosely, do not focus until it connects, maintain maximum acceleration as long as there is contact. Punch through your opponent; all punches should end with a snap several inches behind your target.

诀曰:腰似车轮腿似钻。

Deliver a straight/linear/direct force from a curved form (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直); never lock your elbows or any joints; snapping your joints (elbows) into straight locking positions will damage them. When striking with your front hand, also maintain focus on your rear hand (前手打人, 后手用力). Twist and pivot your waist like a wheel (腰似车轮) and *drill* your legs into the ground (腿似钻) to torque your torso. Visualize your shoulders being connected, when striking with the left hand, the right arm and shoulder move backward by the reaction. Release power through your target to its backside. The punch should accelerate throughout its course and when it connects, still have enough momentum and power to drive clear through your target. But do not over-reach; do not punch beyond your front toe (*Li Bu Chu Jian*, 力不出尖).

These general rules apply to all punches. Synchronize your mind-body till the actions flow with no conscious effort, become spontaneous reflexes. Continuous training and practice is required to constantly refine and re-invent the maneuvers to maintain your combat readiness.

## 1. Straight Punch (*Bu Zhi De Zhi Quan*, 不直的直拳)

This is basically a single hand/arm forward thrusting power discharge/release. We call this the “*not-so-straight*” straight punch (不直的直拳) because the “*straight force*” is delivered with “*curved physical form*” (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直). Keep your elbow bent; do not straighten and lock your elbow when you punch; the shock will damage your elbow. We will describe this in detail. Explore, extrapolate, experiment, and learn from experience; change, adapt, invent, and refine; from knowing one punch, you will know ten thousand punches.

### Lead Hand Straight Punch (Jab, *Yin Quan*, 引拳)

This is the fastest punch. Deliver it from your on-guard ready stance without any added motions and finish again in the ready stance. There should be no wasted motion and no give-away movement preceding the punch (*Yi Bu You Xiang*, 意不有象).

From the left-lead *Holding-the-birds* (*Niao Nan Fei Zhuang*, 鸟难飞桩) small-step posture, visualize your whole body as a hammer and your left forearm as a nail. Completely relax your shoulder and upper arm. Push off with your right rear leg (*drill* inwards and take up power from the ground) shift your body weight forward onto your leading left leg. Immediately push off and pivot on the ball of your leading left foot, *drill* inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) and turn your left heel out, torque your torso a quarter turn to the right stretching the imaginary spring from your left foot to the back of your head, thrust your left shoulder forward, shooting your left forearm loosely and easily forward, upward, and inward. A full body pivot on an axis from your rear foot to your head, the oscillation from shifting weight from one leg to the other, and the opening of your joints (ankle, knee, waist, back, shoulder, and elbow) are used to power this punch. The lead side of the body anchors the pivot point (visualize stretching the imaginary spring from your lead foot to your head) *conducting* the ground (transmitting the force) to your hand (*Lian Tong Yi Guan Zhi Li*, 连通一贯之力).

诀曰：缩身长手，力由脊发。

Oral Tradition: During your focusing of the power release, extend your arms while slightly withdrawing your body. Mildly elongate your spine while discharging a focused balanced-force.

Simultaneously, as you shoot out your leading left arm, rotate your left forearm to palm facing down (*Luo Xuan Ning Da*, 螺旋拧打) as your punch connect; pull your right rear hand backward, upward, and outward as if breaking a string between your wrists (isometric-opposing-force-pair, *Zheng Li*, 争力), keep your rear guard hand up in front of (but away from) your jaw. Coordinate your body to move as a harmonized whole-body, visualize pushing your front knee forward (but keep it stationary) and your rear hip slightly backward (isometric-opposing-force-

pair) shifting your weight to 70% front, 30% back; push your forehead slightly forward and upward (up/down isometric-opposing-force-pair); look at your intended target; keep your chin tucked away. The head, the left fist and the left foot must *arrive* simultaneously.

诀曰:手足齐到定要赢。

Oral Tradition: Stride for simultaneity; hand and foot must arrive simultaneously; cultivate the courage and confidence to win.

On contact, twist your forearm a quarter turn to palm facing down, instantaneously tense and focus your whole body.

诀曰:用拳须透爪。

Tighten your fist, visualize crushing the imaginary egg in your hands; your fingernails piercing your palm (*Quan Wo Jin*, 拳握紧), twist and snap your wrist downward slightly (the back of your hand and forearm should be straight). The punch accelerates from the instant of contact until the ceasing of contact (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发), driving clear through the target.

NOTES: Tensing your entire body and using reverse breathing and grunting greatly increase the *mass* (M) and force ( $F=MA$ ) behind your punch (*Sheng Li Bing Fa*, 声力并发).

Immediately relax and withdraw your left hand, re-tracing the outward going path, like you have touched a red-hot iron plate. Bring your left hand back as fast as you thrust it out. Keep your left arm well up while withdrawing for any possible counter. For fixed-step, push off with your front leg (stretch the imaginary spring connecting your knees) and bounce back to your on-guard small step posture, shifting your weight back to 30% front, 70% back. You should be relaxed almost all the time, tensing only momentarily (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换). Carry the shoulders and arms relaxed and ready at all times for follow-up.

诀曰:进头进手须进身,身手齐到法为真。

You may step in your left foot with your left straight punch to add power. Here, your left foot must *drill* inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) and push off the ground immediately prior to your punch connecting with your target. Step in your left foot and turn your torso as you punch adds power by using the forward moving and twisting force of your body. Use your whole reach; your step should be long enough to make your reach good to punch through your target. The lead straight punch and the lunge step must be one coordinated move, *arriving* simultaneously. (Actually, the front foot must land first, then immediately *drills* downward, pushing off from the ground to take up power from the ground through your legs, waist, and back.) Immediately relax, pull your punching hand back to on-guard and your rear leg forward into a small-step posture. When using a body pivot, turn on the balls of both feet while punching. The fist comes straight from the center with the full power of the legs behind it.

诀曰:练到无形是真功。

Study and nurture the path-of-force-propagation (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路) from the ground to your punch. Practice this leading hand straight punch until the movement is comfortable, easy, natural, and automatic, capable of delivering power spontaneously without apparent effort from any position. Let your mind and body work in synch so the movements flow without conscious effort, so the skill becomes spontaneous reflex. Bring back your lead hand high and keep it high to offset a rear-hand counter from your opponent.

**Practical Example:** The lead hand (finger) speed jab is the longest and fastest hand weapon. You do not need much power to jab at your opponent's eyes. Begin from your on-guard position, without any added motions, whip out your lead hand (finger) speed jab accurately, as in a straight punch, at your opponent's eyes using shocking, flickering force, like swatting a fly. This is a good technique for stop-hit.

### Rear Hand Straight Punch

Keep your hands in neutral motion close to your on-guard position; do not hold them motionless. Start the punch from wherever your hands are with no added motions and finish in your on-guard position.

诀曰:全身及根节之力前摧,中节待转,梢节直刺。

To punch with your right rear hand from the left-lead small-step posture, the body must drive the shoulder, and the shoulder must drive the punch (根节之力前摧). Add force by pivoting your body to a position over the lead foot. Maintain correct balance (equilibrium) at all times to be able to deliver a lead straight punch after your rear straight punch.

From your left-lead small-step posture, *drill* down with the ball of your right foot, turn your right knee slightly inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), torque your torso a quarter turn to your left to drive your right shoulder forward to propel your right forearm and fist. Your weight begins on the ball of your rear foot. You pivot at the waist and your weight is shifted forward into the punch and to your lead foot before connecting. Twist your right forearm to palm facing down as your rear right fist connects. Make sure your rear heel and rear shoulder turn in one piece on an axis from your rear foot to your head. Like the lead hand straight punch, your proper body *alignment* (skeletal) supports your body weight, freeing the whole-body to propel the rear fist. The shifting of your center of gravity is a major contributor of power in this punch. Shift your body weight to your left foot as you punch with your right hand, hinging the left side of the body, and freeing the opposite side for an explosive pivot. Shoot out your punch loosely and easily; do not tense up (focus) until your punch connects.

As you shoot out your right rear fist, pull your left lead hand backward, upward, and outward (visualize breaking the imaginary spring between your wrists), keep your left hand well up in the position of guard. Visualize stretching the imaginary spring from your rear foot to your head (*Yao Ba Hou Zu Deng Qi Lai*, 要把后足蹬起来), your rear heel may be off the ground.

As your fist connects, twist your right forearm inwards (*Luo Xuan Ning Da*, 螺旋拧打), snap your wrist slightly downward, tighten your fist, focus and tense your entire body on impact. Drive clear through your target. Immediately relax and withdraw your right hand along the outgoing path (*Yi Fa Ji Zhi*, 一发即止), return to on-guard as quickly as possible.

**Practical Example:** Feint and Punch - Step out with your left foot and simultaneously throw your lead left straight punch (feint). Immediately draw your right rear foot forward into a small step posture. Before the lead punch reaches its mark, drive your right rear (reverse) punch straight out and twist your body to the left, pivoting on your right foot. As you pivot, get plenty of push and snap from the right side of your body, up from the foot, through the legs and hips, and right shoulder, opening all your joints in a concurrent overlapping sequence. This power is accentuated by the coordination of the whole-body in the follow through. Keep good balance (equilibrium) at all times.

NOTES: Concurrently, practice relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) in “*The-descending-dragon*” posture (*Jiang Long Zhuang*, 降龙桩) to develop your torso's twisting power. Keep your shoulders, elbows, and fists loose as you begin your punch; tension slows you down. Just before impact, clench and twist your fist for delivering maximum whole-body force (*Quan Da Cun Jing*, 拳打寸劲). Study and nurture the path-of-force-propagation from pushing off the rear foot to the punch (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路).

## Examples of Variations: Underhand (Low Line) Straight Punch

To be able to start the punch from wherever your hands are, you need to practice initiate the punch from a low underhand position. Throw the low line underhand straight punch from your center with no added motions, no give away movement, and finish in your on-guard position.

### Lead Hand Underhand (Low Line) Straight Punch (*Beng Quan*, 崩拳)

From a right-lead small-step posture, start with your left rear guard hand high in front of your mouth and your right lead hand low in front of your navel, palms facing upwards. Push off with your left leg (*drill* inwards and take up power from the ground); shift your body weight forward onto your right leg but keep the angle between the right shin and foot larger than 90 degrees. Immediately, push off your right lead foot, pivot on the ball of your right foot, *drill* right leg inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) turn your right heel out, torque your torso a quarter turn to the left, thrust your right shoulder forward, shooting your right forearm loosely and easily forward.

NOTES: A full body pivot on an axis from your rear foot to your head, and the oscillation (*Gu Dang*, 鼓荡) shifting of your weight from one leg to the other, are used to power the punch. The lead side of the body anchors the pivot point.

Simultaneously, shoot out your right arm, as the punch connects, rotate/twist your right forearm inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) to palm facing left (vertical fist); pull your left hand backward, downward, and outward (twisting your left forearm outwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) to palm face upward), keep left elbow down to protect your ribs. Coordinate your body to move as a harmonized whole-body, push your front knee forward and your rear hip slightly backward (forward/backward isometric-opposing-force-pair; *Zheng Li*, 争力) shifting your weight to 70% front 30% back; push your forehead slightly forward and upward (up/down isometric-opposing-force-pair) stretching the imaginary spring between your lead foot and your head; look at your intended target; keep your chin tucked away. The head, the right fist, and the right foot must “arrive simultaneously” (身手齐到法为真). Focus your punch and immediately relax, snap back to on-guard, be ready for follow-up.

NOTES: This punch uses the same body mechanics as the basic lead hand straight punch. Lunge forward with a shuffle step (*Tang Ni Bu*, 趟泥步) while doing the underhand punch (*Beng Quan*, 崩拳) will increase power tremendously (*Ban Bu Beng Quan*, 半步崩拳).

### Rear Hand Underhand (Low Line) Straight Punch (*Pao Quan*, 炮拳)

From a right-lead small-step posture, start with your left rear guard hand, palms facing upwards, low in front of your navel and your right lead hand high in front of your mouth. Drill downward and inward with the ball of your left foot, turn your left knee slightly inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), torque your torso a quarter turn to your right to drive your left shoulder forward to propel your left forearm and fist. Your weight begins on the ball of your rear foot. You pivot at the waist and your weight is shifted forward into the punch and to your lead foot before connecting. As your left rear fist connects, twist your left forearm inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) to palm facing right. Make sure your rear heel and rear shoulder turn in one piece on an axis from your rear foot to your head. Like the lead hand straight punch, use skeletal support (*Gu Ge Zhi Cheng*, 骨骼支撑) to support your body weight freeing the whole-body to propel the rear fist; use optimal alignment and connected-ness (*Lian Tong*, 连通) to transmit force from the ground to your hand (*Jing Lu*, 劲路). The shifting of your center of gravity is a major contributor of power in this punch. Shift your body weight to your right foot as you punch with your left hand, hinging the right side of the body and freeing the opposite side for an explosive pivot.

决曰：骨骼毛发都要支撑道放，争敛互为。

Shoot out your punch loosely and easily; do not tighten up (tense) until the punch connects. As your left rear fist connects, twist your forearm to palm facing right (vertical fist); simultaneously,



pull your right hand backward, upward, and outward as if breaking a string between your wrists (isometric-opposing-force-pair), keep your right lead guard hand up, fist near your forehead (*Pao Quan*, 炮拳) to parry an attack to your right temple (*Gong Shou He Yi*, 攻守合一). Focus and immediately relax, snap back to on-guard, be ready for follow-up.

## Incorporating footwork with your punches (*Zou Bu Fa Quan*, 走步发拳)

After you have laid a firm foundation with fixed-step (*Ding Bu*, 定步) training and conditioning, i.e., be able to take up power from the ground, nurtured the path-of-force-propagation to be able to “transmit” the force from pushing off the ground to your punches etc., you should practice free-step footwork (*Huo Bu*, 活步) with all your punches.

### Examples:

1. **Fixed-step:** single punch (*Dan Fa Quan*, 定步单发拳), double punches (*Lian Fa Quan*, 定步连发拳), and triple punches (*San Quan*, 定步三拳).
2. **One-step:** single punch (一步单发拳), double punches (一步连发拳), and triple punches (一步三拳). Push off your rear foot, step your lead foot forward (approximately one and a half foot's length). Simultaneously as your lead foot step down, *drill* and push off your lead foot to take up power from the ground and shoot out your lead punch. Immediately, pull up rear foot into a small step posture (shuffle-step single punch). Then do the other follow up punches as from fixed-step.
3. **Two steps** three punches (两步三拳): Lead foot circle-step, lead straight punch. Lead foot side-step, rear straight punch and lead straight punch from fixed-step.
4. **Three step** three punches (三步三拳): Do one punch with each step. Do circle-step with lead foot while doing lead hand straight punch. Then do side-step with lead foot while doing rear hand straight punch. Then do shuffle-step with lead foot while doing lead hand straight punch. Return to on-guard immediately.
5. **Running step** punches (跑步拳): Do punches while jogging forward. Take small steps. Be sure to take up power from the ground.

诀曰:进头进手须进身,身手齐到法为真。

NOTES: If possible, try to finish a series of punches with your lead-hand to enable you to return to the correct on-guard position as quickly as possible. Train to be able to start your punches from any hand positions, and be “form-less” when discharging your balanced-force with punches.

诀曰:有形练到无形处,练到无形是真功。

Oral Tradition: Practice and develop your maneuver/technique with proper external form; change, adapt, and refine it until it becomes form-less. A maneuver/technique is most effective when it is form-less.

## 2. Upward Punch (*Zuan Quan*, 钻拳)

This punch integrates defense and offense. It consists of spiraling upward (rise is *drill*, 起是钻) and helical forward forces (*Luo Xuan Zuan Fan*, 螺旋钻翻). The dominant action/force is the twisting (*drilling*) of your forearm (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋) in conjunction with the flexing of your elbow joint (*Zuan Fan*, 钻翻). You must use your harmonized whole-body action to take up power from the ground. Push off your leg (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), your torso pivot drives the shoulder, the shoulder drives the elbow, the elbow drives the hand (全身及根节之力前摧); prior to punching, you are square to your opponent; when your punch connects, you are oblique. Using the whole-body pivot (*Luo Xuan Ning Da*, 螺旋拧打) and vertical isometric-opposing-force-pair along your spine (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力) are crucial. This punch is most useful in “in-fighting” but is effective in all distance *intervals*.

### Lead Hand Upward Punch

Start from the left-lead small-step on-guard posture; keep your elbows prop out (*Heng Cheng Shu Bao*, 横撑竖抱). Make certain you have no tension in your elbows, shoulders and legs; coil your back slightly (should not be visible). Push off with your rear leg, *drill* your lead leg into the ground (*Jiao Xia Cai*, 脚下踩), pivoting on the ball of your lead foot (twisting your left lead knee inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), turning your left heel outward), un-coil your back (opening joints and stretch the imaginary springs from your lead foot to the back of your head; *Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力), shovel your hip up by straightening your lead leg, torque your torso to your right driving your left shoulder forward. Simultaneously, move your left elbow inward and upward propelling your lead hand forward and upward (rise is *drill*, 起是钻) along your central line. As your punch connects, twist your left leading forearm outward along its axis (*Luo Xuan Ning Da*, 螺旋拧打), turning your hand from palms down to palm facing your face. Push your head up slightly (*Tou Xu Ling*, 头虚领) so there is a rotation and stretching of your spine (visualize stretching the spring from your lead foot to your head). Simultaneously, pull your rear hand backward, outward and slightly downward to a guard position (fall is *overturn*, 落是翻); visualize breaking the imaginary string between your hands or visualize tearing an imaginary cotton sheet between your hands (*Liang Shou Ru Si Mian*, 两手如撕绵). As your

punch connects, twist your forearm (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋), focus (tense), and snap through your target, then immediately relax and bounce back to your small-step on-guard posture. Be ready for the next punch.

Keep your legs slightly bent before striking; straighten them suddenly as you send in the punch (but do not lock your knees; *Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直). When stepping in with the punch, pay attention to simultaneity: your punch, your foot, and your head should “arrive simultaneously”. You may pull your guard hand upward and backward near your temple (*San Jiao Li*, 三角力) to parry while simultaneously execute an upward punch.

## Rear Hand Upward Punch

To execute the upward punch from your right rear hand from a left-lead, be sure to use torso rotation and shift your weight forward, driving with your rear leg. The power comes from pushing off the right rear leg, thrusting the right hip forward (the left hip backward); torque the torso to drive your right shoulder to drive your right arm upward and forward. Pivot on an axis from your rear foot to your head, over your lead foot; as your punch connects, twist your right forearm (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋) to palm facing inward. Follow-through, snap and punch through your target.

Example 1: From a left-lead posture, draw a left lead, then side-step forward slightly to your left, *slip* your opponent’s left lead over your right shoulder, twist quickly to your left to deliver a short, sharp rear upward punch with your right. Your punching right arm should obstruct or raise your opponent’s left arm.

Example 2: Start your upward punch below the line of vision of your opponent and punch upward along his central line to hit his chin. If your fist misses, continue upward and hit with your “upper cut” elbow.

## Shovel Hook

The shovel hook is the upward punch to the “inside” (*Quan Li*, 圈里) of your opponent in “in-fighting”. Keep your legs bent and coil your torso (semi-crouched) before striking. Bring your elbow in, almost resting on your rib cage. Suddenly, straighten your legs, un-coil your back, shovel your hip up to send in your punch. You may strike with your fist or your palm heel.

Example: Stand in parallel-step posture with knees slightly bent, feet shoulder width apart, arms in on-guard position. *Drill* your left leg downwards and inwards to rotate your torso 45 degrees to your right, coil your torso into a semi-crouch; simultaneously lower your right hand to hip level at your side; palm facing downward. *Drill* your right leg downwards and inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), uncoil you back, shovel your right hip forward and upward; rotating your body

90 degrees to your left; simultaneously thrust your right hand forward and upward. Turn your right forearm 90 degrees clockwise (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) as you punch through your target with your right palm heel (fingers pointing right); bring your left hand under your chin to guard your central line.

NOTES: When executing upward punches, if your hands miss your targets, bend your arms and strike up with your elbows or strike with your shoulders. Power releases from elbow strikes are the same as that of punches but requires larger torso turning.

When you have a firm foundation in the fixed-step upward punch, combine it with free-step footwork. Practice punches with both hands. Be creative and use push-hands and sparring to try things out, learn from experience, answers to most questions can be found in sparring it out.

诀曰:两手结合迎面出,自然把定五道关。

By coordinating your two hands in a frontal attack, you eliminate the necessity of pure defensive movements. Pure defense would not lead to victory. Upward/forward *drilling* punches (*Zuan Quan*, 钻拳) and the related forward/lateral back fist strikes (*Heng Quan*, 横拳) can be used in unified offense/defense against straight punches.

诀曰:起首横拳难招架。

When the forward/lateral back fist strike is used primarily for defense (*Heng Quan*, 横拳), there is more spiral motion and flexing (opening of) your elbow along a curved path (*Zuan Fan*, 钻翻) than twisting/*drilling* motion of the forearm (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋); your punching hand may start palm facing down in a low position, the forearm rotating/*drilling* outward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) as it travels upward (along your central line) and forward (from under your chin), ending at mouth level with palm facing upward/inward.

When the upward punch is used primarily for upward attack (*Zuan Quan*, 钻拳), the twisting of the forearm (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋) is dominant; while in a primarily forward attack the opening of the elbow joint (*Zuan Fan*, 钻翻) is dominant.

诀曰:一触即变,改变对方力向,攻守合一。

Example: “*Drill*” your punch (*Zuan Fan Heng Quan*, 钻翻横拳) to your opponent's outside (起横); then press down towards his inside (落顺, wrapping, *Ning Guo*, 拧裹) while *drilling* up with your other hand (*Ying Zhuo*, 鹰捉). Or *drill* punch to your opponent's inside (*Quan Li*, 圈里); then press down towards his outside (*Quan Wai*, 圈外) and attack his central line. Or *drill* punch to your opponent's outside (*Quan Wai*, 圈外); then pull hand backward and outward to near your temple while executing a straight punch with your other hand (*Pao Quan*, 炮拳). When using

upward punches defensively, as soon as your forearm contacts your opponent's forearm, be sure to twist your forearm (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋) and flex your elbow (*Zuan Fan*, 钻翻) to redirect your opponent's force (改变对方力向); integrate your offense and defense as one (*Gong Shou He Yi*, 攻守合一).

诀曰:起横不见横。

NOTES: The switching of dominance between *Luo Xuan* (螺旋) and *Zuan Fan* (钻翻) must be invisible. (See “Forward Back Fist Strike” below.) Change and re-direct your opponent's force direction on contact, direct it away from your central line (down and out); release power explosively at any point of contact, direct your force towards your opponent's central line (*Shou Zhong Yong Zhong*, 守中用中).

### 3. Downward Punch (*Zai Quan*, 栽拳)

Downward punch must also deliver a balanced-force with curved external form (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直) and requires the harmonized whole-body to drive your forearm forward and downwards. When punching forward downward, your lateral (sideways left/right) body movement is bigger than that of the straight punch or the upward punch. The up/down isometric-opposing-force-pair along your spine (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力) and the whole-body or waist pivot is the key to your power.

诀曰:一动全身转,螺旋力无形。

If you increase your torso turning and deliver a bent-arm (elbow hooked) lateral strike from the outside to the inside of your body towards your central line, using more hip power and waist turning force, this is the lateral hook (*Heng Xiang Zai Quan*, 横向栽拳). The essence of the lateral hook is that you “swing” (snap) your elbow upward at the last possible moment when executing your punch.

#### Rear Hand Downward Punch

From the left-lead small-step posture, push off your right rear foot, with your weight starting to move forward, simultaneously push your forehead slightly upward and forward (opening all joints stretching the imaginary spring from your right rear foot to your head); torque your torso to drive your right shoulder forward (pivot along an axis from your rear foot to your head over your left lead foot); simultaneously shift your center of gravity forward and downward, lift your right elbow higher than your right wrist as if swinging an imaginary weight hanging at your right elbow upward; propel your right forearm forward and downward to strike an imaginary target

with your fist along your central line at navel level. On contact, twist your forearm along its axis to palm facing right, focus and tense your whole body (*Luo Xuan Zuan Fa*, 螺旋钻翻). Visualize standing on a moving vehicle, when it stops suddenly, your entire body continues to move forward. If you strike at a target while catching your balance, using this inertia, you impart tremendous force - your whole body mass multiplied by the deceleration plus the force from your arms. Simultaneously, you may pull your left guard hand backward, upward and outward in a twisting motion to protect your mouth/throat area or slap it forward, inward and upward as a “closing” parry (*Du Da*, 堵打). Keep your parry hand “far away” from your face so it would not be smashed backward into your face. Immediately relax; push off your lead foot, bounce back to your small step on-guard posture.

诀曰：有意勿露形，露形必不赢。

Example: From the left-lead small-step posture, step forward with your left foot while simultaneously squatting downward *slipping* your opponent’s attack over your right shoulder and execute the right rear hand downward punch forward and downward towards your opponent’s groin. Prior to striking, do not retract or draw back your striking hand; do not “telegraph” your intention.

### Lead Hand Downward Punch

Downward punch with the lead hand requires *drilling* inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) and pivoting on your leading leg, stretching the imaginary spring between your lead foot and the back of your head, turn your waist to torque your lead shoulder forward; lifting your striking arm's elbow higher than your wrist as if swinging an imaginary weight hanging at your elbow upward; punch to a target just inside your lead knee at navel level with inward twisting of your forearm (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋).

NOTES: Practice downward punch from the parallel-step posture will let you get the “feel of using the whole body pivot” and the kinesthetic experience.

### Lateral Hook (*Heng Xiang Zai Quan*, 横向栽拳)

Start and end in the on-guard ready position. Avoid any give away or wind-up movement; do not pull your arm back to initiate your punch. Take up power from the ground; generate the power behind the hook with footwork induced weight shift and core/torso oscillation (*Gu Dang*, 鼓荡), with body pivot, and with well-positioned forearm and loose shoulder muscles. Keep the path of your hook tight, if you “open up”, your hook will degenerate into a looping swing. Keep your rear guard hand high to protect your mouth/throat area and the rear elbow down to protect your ribs, or “slap” your rear guard hand forward and inward as a “closing” parry.

## Lead Hook

The lead hook is a short-range weapon for use when your opponent is coming to you. A natural way to deliver a hook is to combine it with side-step and the body pivot. Footwork makes this punch. Of all the basic skill punches, this is the most difficult punch to master.

From the left-lead small-step posture, begin as if shooting a left jab. Push off your right leg and simultaneously push off the ball of the lead left foot (reverse flow, shortened lever; 顺力逆行), shifting your weight onto your right leg. Twist your hips to your right, torque your torso to drive your left waist and shoulder to drive your left bent arm (left elbow prop out from the side of the body) in an arc. The left lead knee *drills* inward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋); left heel turns outward for the body to pivot. Your left shoulder should twist inwards while your right shoulder should turn in unison. Twist the left forearm and wrist inward and downward, the left elbow lifting above your wrist at the moment before impact. Snap your left forearm and fist down and your left elbow up at the last possible moment. On contact, focus (tense) all muscles of your whole body; explode sharply without twisting the body out of shape. The waist and shoulders reverse when the blow lands to “*shorten the lever*”, drop your body a little to the right side to get more weight shift.

When you shoot out your lead hook, pull your rear hand backward, upward and outward to guard your head, or “slap” your rear hand towards your central line as if to parry an incoming straight punch in a “*closing*” parry.

The lead hook is delivered loosely and easily with the proper pivoting of the whole-body. Your weight shifts with the hook to the side opposite the side you hook from. If you step in with the left lead punch, use the “*circle step*” (*Huan Rao Bu*, 环绕步), move forward and slightly to your left, pointing the left toe in. Your body pivots on the ball of your lead foot as your left arm and fist snap down so that your blow have a better reach and will better drive through the target of your opponent.

NOTES: The difference between the downward/forward punch (*Zai Quan*, 栽拳) and the lateral hook (*Heng Xiang Zai Quan*, 横向栽拳) is that in the downward/forward punch the up/down force is dominant while in the (lateral) hook the lateral twist and body pivot is dominant.

## Rear Hook

The rear hook is for in-fighting. Its body mechanics for execution is similar to that of the rear hand downward punch. The power of the hook is from the whole-body pivot of the hip and shoulder (or a waist pivot) prior to the striking arm reaching the central line of the body (the target or focused zone).

NOTES: To defense against a hook, you should roll with the punch to minimize its impact. Another way to neutralize a hook is to move in so that the hook ends harmlessly around your

neck. If you end up in a clinch, use your short-range weapons: elbows and knees, and/or upward punches to disengage.

## B. Strikes and Chops (*Pi Fa*, 劈法)

Strikes and chops use “elliptical swings” similar to that of throwing an object: The movement of the body starts with pushing off with the foot, continue with concurrent sequential overlapping straightening of the ankles, the knees and the torso, add the shoulder rotation, the upper arm swing, and culminate in a forearm and wrist snap. The timing is such that each segment adds its speed/acceleration to that of the others, the final phase of the movement being the fastest. To strike through and damage your target, this increase in speed/acceleration must be maintained as long as there is contact (follow through). After generating the momentum of your “elliptical swing”, the speed/acceleration may be increased without applying additional force by reducing the radius of the swinging arc. This is the “*shortened lever principle*” and is achieved by a backward thrust of the forward leg and a slight withdrawal (coiling) of your torso.

Thus, the elements affecting the quality of a strike/chop are:

1. Shorten the radius for quicker action and acceleration,
2. Lengthen arc for imparting greater momentum,
3. Centering the rotation axis with the center of gravity for increasing the speed in rotation, and
4. Multiply speed by concurrent sequential overlapping movements.

Most of the advices on punches are applicable to strikes and chops: Think and analyze, explore and experiment, learn from experience and refine. Study the path-of-force-propagation (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路) and nurture it. Throw the strike with *comfortable natural ease* (do not stiffen-up prior to contact) with hip torque and body weight shift to add power. Simplify and train maneuvers/techniques that are instinctive and natural. Synch mind and body till actions flow with no conscious effort, become spontaneous reflexes. Continuous training and practice is required to refine and re-invent the maneuvers to maintain constant combat readiness.



## 1. Chops (*Pi Fa*, 劈法)

For efficient open hand strikes and chops, keep your fingers and thumbs extended to stiffen the striking hand. The striking surface extends from your elbow to your hand, including the forearm (*Pi Quan Zhou Da*, 劈拳肘打). Chopping motions are similar to that of “*splitting*” wood log with an ax. Relax your elbow, bicep, and shoulder when you “chop”.

### Vertical Downward Chop (*Zheng Pi*, 正劈)

From the left-lead *Hook/hang* small-step posture (*Gou Gua Zhuang*, 勾挂桩) raise your right hand overhead. Visualize there are imaginary springs connecting your wrists and connecting your wrists to the back of your neck. *Drill* inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) and push off your right leg; torque your torso to drive your right shoulder forward while chopping downward loosely with your right arm in a vertical plane containing your central line (*Luo Xuan Zuan Fan*, 螺旋钻翻). Your waist should turn like a wheel (*Yao Si Che Lun*, 腰似车轮) and your legs rotate like drills (*Tui Si Zuan*, 腿似钻). Simultaneously, raise your left hand overhead. Remember to focus on your rear hand while striking with your lead hand (前手打人后手用力). The body movement is similar to that of the rear hand straight punch with the addition of a final backward thrust of the forward leg and a slight withdrawal of the torso to “*shorten the lever*”.

Next, *drill* your left leg inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋); torque your torso to drive your left shoulder forward while chopping downward loosely with your left arm in the vertical plane containing your central line. Simultaneously, raise your right hand overhead. The body motion is similar to that of the lead hand straight punch with a final backward thrust of the forward leg and slight withdrawal of the torso to “*shorten the lever*”.

Start practicing vertical downward chop (*Zheng Pi*, 正劈) by doing it in large slow motion trial-and-feel mode (*Shi Li*, 试力). Slow is smooth; smooth is fast. Feel the resistance of the imaginary springs between the hands and between the hands and the back of your neck. Pull your arms apart as if tearing a sheet of cotton between your hands (or like pulling silk from a cocoon; 运劲如抽丝). Visualize your entire forearm as the striking surface (*Pi Quan Zhou Da*, 劈拳肘打). Keep your elbows bent. Reach forward as you chop downward and then use the *shortened lever principle* to preserve the maximum acceleration up to the last instant of contact by pushing backward with your forward leg and slightly withdrawing your torso at the last instant.

When you have mastered this in fixed-step (*Ding Bu*, 定步), practice with free-step (*Huo Bu*, 活步), e.g.:

1. Step forward and chop with either lead or rear hand.

2. Step backward and chop with either lead or rear hand.
3. Shuffle-step lead foot forward chop with lead hand, side-step lead foot forward chop with rear hand, shuffle-step lead foot forward chop with lead hand (三步三劈拳).

诀曰：进头进手需进身，手脚齐到法为真。

NOTES: Take up power from the ground; initially complete your step then chop; eventually step, chop and head must *arrive simultaneously*. Seek, sense, and experience the concurrent sequential overlapping linkage of your body elements from foot to head. Cultivate and nurture the path-of-force-propagation from the ground to your chopping hand/forearm (*Jing Lu*, 劲路).

### Inclined Chop (*Xie Pi*, 斜劈)

This is similar to the vertical chop; just torque your torso a little more while chopping downwards on an inclined plane. Twist your rear hand to palm facing outward as you raise it overhead.

When you have mastered the fixed-step technique, combine it with free-step footwork. Initially, complete your stepping then chop. Eventually, you want simultaneity: stepping, striking, and head to *arrive simultaneously*.

Practice power release chopping in two stages. First practice relaxed soft power release. Relax your entire arm so it swings down like a whip with *comfortable natural ease*. When you can feel your whole-body actions are in harmony then try to focus your strike. Your power release must not stop at waist level or on contact. Instead, you should start discharging/releasing your force on contact and power through your target. When practicing chopping power release, visualize your hand touching a red-hot steel plate at the end of your strike. Retract it immediately to your ready position after your strike. Be ready for follow-up strikes.

NOTES: Side-stepping to your opponent's outside (*Quan Wai*, 圈外) and inclined chop inwards (*He*, 合) onto your opponent's trunk or attacking limb is a good offense/defense for low line attacks (*Qian Zi Shou*, 千字手).

### Lateral Chop (*Ce Pi*, 侧劈)

From the left-lead small-step posture, starting with your torso square to your front (*Bu Xie Shen Zheng*, 步斜身正), bring your left lead hand to mouth level, turn your left forearm to palm facing your face. Pushing off your right foot, shift your weight forward, pivot on your left lead

leg (*drill* clockwise twisting left knee inwards; *Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), turn to your right to drive your left shoulder forward (torso bladed). Simultaneously, rotating your left forearm to palm facing down, swing your left arm outward to strike an imaginary target a foot to the left of your left lead leg. Simultaneously, swing your right hand/forearm backward and outward in an “open” motion (*Da Kai*, 打开); twist your right arm to palm facing downwards. Keep all joints (shoulders, elbows, and wrists) relax and flexible (*Guan Jie Ling Huo*, 关节灵活); immediately snap back to your on-guard position.

NOTES: Remember to *drill* your lead foot and turn the heel outward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) when doing the lead hand outside lateral strike to take up power from the ground (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯). You may visualize using one hand as a parry and the other as a strike (*Gong Shou He Yi*, 攻守合一) or use short fast chops to attack (parry) the limbs of your opponent’s attacks from any angle in a 360 degrees defense.

## 2. Back Fist Strike (*Zuan Fan*, 钻翻)

诀曰：一动全身转,出入螺旋式。

### Lateral Back Fist Strike (*Pie Shen Chui*, 撇身捶)

Stand erect in parallel-step with knees slightly bent (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直), with feet shoulder width apart; do not have much weight on your heels (*Zu Gen Wei Xu*, 足跟为虚). Extend your right hand forward slightly at about mouth level, palm facing down; place your left hand near your right elbow at the central line in on-guard posture. Pushing off your left leg with knee turn slightly inward while pushing simultaneously with the ball of your right foot (right knee turn slightly outward) rotate your hips and shoulders to your right; simultaneously strike downward to your right with your right forearm and back fist in a whipping action, twist your right forearm to palm facing up as you strike (*Zuan Fan*, 钻翻). As you rotate your body back to front facing position, extend your left hand over your right hand to mouth level rotating your left forearm to palm facing down. Place your right hand near your left elbow at your central line. Now rotate to strike to your left. This strike may be used to hit an opponent behind you by doing a 180 turn (*Pie Shen Chui*, 撇身捶).

NOTES: Here you are using body mechanic similar to that of the reverse punch (rear hand straight punch) to launch your lead hand. You may use the back fist strike as a parry and launch your rear hand straight punch simultaneously (*Gua Da Quan*, 挂打拳) integrating your defense and offense as one (*Gong Shou He Yi*, 攻守合一).

### Forward Back Fist Strike (*Heng Quan*, 横拳)

Stand erect in parallel-step with knees slightly bent (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直), with feet shoulder width apart; do not have much weight on your heels (*Zu Gen Wei Xu*, 足跟为虚). Extend your right hand forward slightly at about mouth level, right palm facing left; place your left hand near your right elbow at your central line in on-guard posture, left palm facing right. Pushing off your left leg with knee turn slightly inward, take up power from the ground, drive your left shoulder forward, shoot your left back fist strike forward, from just under your chin to a point directly in front of your nose, ending with palm facing upward. The dominant action is the concurrent sequential overlapping opening of your joints (*Zuan Fan*, 钻翻) and with a quarter turn twisting of your forearm (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋, less than in the upward punch, *Zuan Quan*, 钻拳). Simultaneously, pull your right hand backward, downward, and outward to a point near your left elbow at your central line in on-guard posture, right palm facing downward. Be ready to shoot out your right back fist strike.

NOTES: Though opening your elbow joint is the dominant action (*Zuan Fan*, 钻翻), *Heng Quan* (横拳) must have forearm twisting (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋) when it connects; *drill* your legs and take up power from the ground. You may use the forward back fist strike (*Heng Quan*, 横拳) as a parry and launch your rear hand straight punch simultaneously (*Tan Da*, 摊打) to integrate your defense and offense as one (*Gong Shou He Yi*, 攻守合一).

### 3. Palm Heel Strike (*Zhang Fa*, 掌法)

Palm heel strike motions are similar to throwing an object at your target (*Zhi Zhuang Zhang*, 掷撞掌).

诀曰:用掌要有气。

#### Overhand throw motion

Assume the left-lead small-step posture. Bring your right hand near your right ear. Shift your weight forward; rotate your hips and shoulders to your left driving your right forearm forward striking through your target with your right palm heel as if throwing a ball at your opponent's face. Simultaneously withdraw your left hand to near your left ear. Remain relaxed throughout; the motion is like throwing a ball with your right rear hand. Immediately bounce back to you small step posture. Now, shift your weight slightly forward, rotate your hips and shoulders to your right and drive your left forearm forward to strike with your left palm heel as if throwing a

ball with your lead hand. Your spine is your axis of rotation. Explore and experiment with directing your force forward, downward, or at oblique angles.

Example: Keep your hands high in on-guard position with fingers and thumbs extended as if holding balloons. Strike your opponent's face by "throwing a ball into his face". The extended fingers will likely get into an eye. Step forward into your opponent with hip torque and body weight shift to add power.

### **Side arm (underhand) throw motion (Paddle Water, *Bo Shui*, 拨水)**

Side arm palm heel strike is similar to the overhand-throw palm heel strike but using a side-arm-throw motion. Visualize standing in waist deep water and paddling water forward and upward. Keep your guard hand high. Explore and experiment with directing your force forward upward and inward at different angles. This is development and extension of the paddle water *Shi Li* exercise (*Bo Shui Shi Li*, 拨水试力) and the "closing" lateral inward *Fa Li* (*He*, 合). Maintain *alignment* and *connected-ness* (*Shu Zhan Lian Tong*, 舒展连通) to take up power from the ground.

Example: Start from a single-hand push-hands engagement (*Dan Da Shou*, 单搭手), step backwards and arrest your rearward movement by dropping your hips and pivoting, draw your opponent's arm downward, backward, and outward. Then, *drilling* inwards with your rear leg (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), push off your rear foot to take up power from the ground; reverse your backward movement to a forward movement and strike your opponent with a circular side arm throw motion (*Shan Dian Shou*, 闪电手).

## **4. Forearm Strikes**

Punches to the head are usually parried by the hand or are evaded by *slips* or *bobs-and-weaves*. The articulated elbows and forearms are normally used for protection against body blows. When parrying with your forearm, "on contact" with your opponent's arm immediately rotate and twist (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋) your forearm to deflect, re-direct, and change the direction of the incoming forces (*Gai Bian Li Xiang*, 改变力向). When immobilizing, twist and grind your forearm into your opponent's arm to induce pain.

诀曰:螺旋力无形,出入螺旋式。

Learn to push or strike explosively with your forearm; train to be able to release power from any point of contact. Do not extend your forearm beyond your front toe when you strike or push forward with your forearm. You may use your forearm in all the strikes described in chops (*Pi*

*Quan Zhou Da*, 劈拳肘打) or slide your forearm at the point of contact into a upward or a downward punch (*Dian Shang De Bian Hua*, 点上的变化).

## C. Elbow Strikes (*Zhou*, 肘)

In *close interval* “in-fighting”, when the distance is too close for full length arm strikes and kicks, the elbow is used. The forearms and the articulate elbows are the shield for your upper body defense. Counter horizontal elbow strikes with vertical elbow strikes and vice versa. Use forearms and elbows to deflect incoming punches: tuck an elbow (bent arm) against your short ribs and turn the arm and torso to cushion income blows (roll with the punch).

### Swing Elbow (Horizontal)

*Drill* and push off your rear leg, pivot on the ball of your lead foot, twist your hips and thrust your attacking rear elbow forward in an arc parallel to the ground, twisting your wrist inwards to flex the elbow to the maximum and smash it into your opponent. The body mechanic, rapid pivot, and to take up power from the ground, are similar to that of the rear hand straight punch.

If you miss with swing elbow, either swing the elbow back to deliver a reverse elbow or do a complete 360 degrees turn and swing a reverse elbow with your opposite arm.

### Uppercut Elbow

Push off the rear foot, simultaneously step forward the lead foot and thrust up your lead elbow in an arc while twisting your wrist inwards bending the elbow fully to impact the pointed tip on your opponent. At the moment of contact your fist should be near your ear. The body mechanic, to take up power from the ground, is similar to that of the lead hand upward punch. If you miss with the uppercut elbow, follow-up and do a downward elbow.

NOTES: If you miss with an upward punch, you can continue swinging your elbow upwards to deliver an uppercut elbow.

### Reverse Elbow

From the left-lead small-step posture, step your right rear foot to the right side of your opponent's central line, close to the right side of your opponent. Turn your head to look out the corner of your right eye to see your target. Pivot on the ball of your right foot to your left

(counter-clockwise) and swing your left elbow around in an arc to smash a reverse elbow into your opponent. The body mechanic is similar to that of the lateral back fist strike.

If you miss a left reverse elbow strike, turn complete around (counter-clockwise) and strike a right swing elbow with your opposite arm.

### **Backward Elbow**

From the parallel-step posture, turn your torso slightly to your left while bringing your bent right elbow forward. Then rapidly torque your torso to your right and smash your right elbow backwards.

### **Straight Lateral Side Elbow**

From the parallel-step posture, turn your torso slightly to your left while bringing your bent right elbow forward. Then rapidly torque your torso to your right and smash your right elbow straight out to your right side. Step in your right foot with your lateral side elbow to add power.

### **Downward Elbow**

Pushing off the ball of both feet, rise up on the toes but do not lift the leg off the ground; keep both feet anchored. Simultaneously raise the right elbow up; keep both elbows close to your head to avoid an upper zone counter. Twist your right hip back and down, bending the knees and thrust your right elbow downwards to strike your opponent.

## **D. Shoulder Strikes**

When your opponent has penetrated inside your “first strike circle”, your long weapons – hands and feet strikes – become impractical. Protect your head and throat with your guard hand and strike with your shoulder. Use your whole-body to drive the shoulder impact point; explore and experiment to strike:

- a. Upward/forward
- b. Downward/forward
- c. Backward

## E. Kicks (*Tui Fa*, 腿法)

诀曰:抬腿半边空。

Lifting one of your legs to kick will drastically reduce your stability. Leg maneuvers/techniques are effective only if kept low, and done when your opponent's posture integrity is compromised. In general, kick and withdraw your leg quickly as if kicking onto a red-hot steel plate; tense and focus all muscles when your leg smashes through the target. Do not kick without hand contact with your opponent to provide stability (无搭不伸腿). Firm foundation in footwork (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步) and relaxed-standing in one-leg postures (*Du Li Zhuang*, 独立桩, *Dan Tui Yi Tuo Zhuang*, 单腿依托桩) are keys to clean execution of kicking techniques. (See Appendix E: Kicks and Knee Strikes for a training outline.)

### 1. Snap Kicks (*Dian Jiao*, 点脚)

These are based on the wading step (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步). Limit your snap kicks to below knee level. Execute it with comfortable natural ease (顺其自然), keep your balance (equilibrium) and combine your stepping with your kicking.

#### Front Snap Kick

If distance is appropriate, use a low sharp snap kick to your opponent's ankle or shin, drive your leg forward with your hip; keep your knee and ankle loose as you snap your foot forward using your hip and knee as hinges. Maintain your posture and balance; drive with your hip and thigh, stretch the imaginary spring between your kicking foot and your head; your upper torso should pivot backwards on the side of your kicking leg i.e., when snap kicking with your left foot, you pivot your upper torso to your left and vice versa; upper and lower torso twist in opposite directions to maintain equilibrium (*Shen Ti Luo Xuan Ning Zhuan*, 身体螺旋拧转). The kicking foot should be lowered as it moves forward; whether you hit your target or not is less important than keeping your posture integrity; positioning your foot for your next step. Low front snap kick to your opponent's shin should be delivered from your rear leg.

Example: From the left-lead small-step posture, lead or feint with your left hand finger jab; snap kick with your right leg to your opponent's shin; or snap kick with your left shin into your opponent's left lead leg inner thigh.



## **Side Snap Kick**

Side-step with your lead leg and counter an attack with a side snap kick delivered with the outside edge of your rear foot to your opponent's rib cage. Or side-step with your rear leg and deliver a side snap kick with your lead leg shin to the outside of your opponent's lead leg (thigh).

## **2. Thrust Kicks (*Deng Ta Jiao*, 蹬踏脚)**

### **Inside edge forward (*Heng Duo Jiao*, 横跺脚)**

Keep your lead supporting leg slightly bent. Lift your rear kicking knee to navel level, turn the inside edge of your kicking foot forward, toe outward, thrust your hip forward and straighten your leg to thrust kick your foot forward and downward (*Deng Ta*, 蹬踏) towards your opponent's knee or lower body, stretch the imaginary spring between your kicking foot and your same side shoulder; your upper torso should pivot towards the same side as your kicking leg; when you are thrust kicking with your left leg, pivot your upper torso towards your left and use your right hand to guard. Targets are lower abdomen, thigh, knee or shin. On contact, immediately thrust downwards along your opponent's body; step down and into your opponent. When releasing power downward, pay attention to pushing your head up slightly to gain power from the up/down isometric-opposing-force-pair along your spine (身体纵轴相争). Keep your hands high in guard position and maintain your fighting posture; keep your balance by twisting your upper and lower torso in opposite directions. Position your foot to land at your intended point of stepping advance (*Ding Ba Bu*, 丁八步). Alternatively, after your thrust kick, pull the knee of your kicking leg back quickly to near your chest, before setting your foot on the ground.

NOTES: To counter a thrust kick, attack the kicker during his preparation (*Du Da*, 堵打).

### **Outside edge forward (*Ce Ti*, 侧踢)**

When using thrust kick with your (lead or rear) leg, you may turn the outside edge of your kicking foot forward, toe inward and thrust kick as above. Keep your supporting leg slightly bent, stretch the imaginary spring between your kicking foot and the opposite shoulder, pivot your torso towards the side of your supporting leg i.e., when kicking with your right leg, pivot towards your left and vice versa. Pull back the knee of your attacking leg quickly before setting foot on the ground to prevent opponent seizing your leg. Always maintain your balance.

## Foot Stomp

Keep your supporting leg slightly bent. Lift your kicking knee to navel level then stomp your foot down on top of your opponent's foot (instep). You can turn the inside edge of your foot to facing outwards or inwards as you bring your foot down. Visualize stretching the imaginary springs connecting your feet to your head (上下争力).

## 4. Swing Kick (*Sao Ti*, 扫踢)

Swing kicks are for long range “out-fighting”; the power comes mainly from a waist twist rapid hip rotation or a body pivot (*Ning Yao Zhuan Shen*, 拧腰转身). They are slow, requiring preparation. To counter swing kicks, step-in and attack a swing kicker on his preparation (*Du Da*, 堵打); to back away from a swing kick is to give a swing kicker room to kick.

### Swing kick with the rear leg

From the left-lead small-step posture, keeping your front left supporting leg slightly bent, pivot on the ball of the left foot; twist the hips to the left to swing the bent right leg in an arc (first up then down) to smash the instep or the lower half of your shin on your opponent's lead leg thigh or knee. The kicking leg is kept bent during the swing. At the last moment before contact, the lower leg is whipped straight. Tense all muscles as you kick out through your target. Withdraw the kicking leg immediately to prevent it being seized. Keep your left hand raised in a high guard position near your left temple for defense during your kick.

Swing kick with the leading leg is quicker but not as powerful e.g., sweep and hook with the leading leg, backward sweep (reverse swing kick) with the leading leg, etc.

## F. Knee

In “out-fighting”, you may raise your knee to avoid strikes or as a shield to cushion the impact of your opponent's kicks. In close range “in-fighting” where full arm strikes and kicking are impractical, you may strike with your knees. Knee strikes get power from leverage; clinch and pull your opponent downwards as you strike; do not use knee strikes without holding on to your opponent as you may lose your balance or open yourself to a counter (无搭不伸腿).

## **Swing Knee**

Hold on to your opponent's arm, shoulder or neck. Powerfully twist your hips thrusting your knee up in a sideways arc to smash into your opponent. Direct your force towards his central line while pulling him downwards, towards the side of your striking knee.

## **Straight Knee**

Hold on to your opponent and pull him forwards and downwards. Step forward to increase power. Thrust your rear knee upward to smash (spike) into your opponent's groin, solar plexus, short ribs, etc. Keep your sole parallel to the ground (toe up) so your foot may strike your opponent's groin on a high knee strike.

Example: Step deeply into your opponent's center gate (*Zhong Men*, 中门) and lift the knee high with upturned toe to strike. The raising knee and toe are the striking points.

## **G. Hip**

From the large-step posture (*Taming-the-tiger Posture*, *Fu Hu Zhuang*, 伏虎桩), drill your front leg into the ground and twist your torso to strike with your hips. This is used only as a last resort when the situation presents itself, or to disturb your opponent's equilibrium to throw him.

Examples: If you step too deeply into your opponent's center gate, twist violently and strike with your hips between his thighs. Or, if you step passed your opponent, strike the outside of his thigh and hip to upset his balance.

## **H. Head**

### **Forward head butt, Side head butt**

When in a clutch, control or immobilize your opponent's arms, pull him forward, use your forehead or side of your head to smash into his nose.

We have briefly described some **San Shou** (散手) fighting maneuvers/techniques. Each martial arts school has its specialties. You should not attempt to learn them all; but should have a broad based general knowledge. Then carefully pick several that suit your instinctive natural abilities and learn them well. A few well-learned techniques are better than lots of unfamiliar ones and training a maneuver/technique that is against your instinctive natural abilities is futile because that training would fail under stress. Remember, develop your innate abilities, if you have any questions about a maneuver/technique, the answers can usually be found by sparring it out.

## Training Guideline - Summary

The following may seem garrulous but the points covered are important. You need repeated exposures; you must re-learn a lesson multiple times to ingrain it.

Yiquan **San Shou** (散手) training and conditioning includes: relaxed-standing postures, trial-and-feel, footwork, solo maneuvers/techniques (**Dan Cao Shou**, 单操手), tactics, sparring, and supplemental exercises to develop strength, speed, endurance, and agility.

决曰: 整体协调, 连通一贯, 全身力一。

You must reach a fair standard of technical ability i.e., be able to execute techniques with the use of proper whole-body mechanics (*alignment, connected-ness* and take up power from the ground), merge all force components as *one*, before you can apply tactics. In this section, we will re-visit a training guideline.

决曰: 有意而练, 无意而用。

First, you must identify your own goals, purpose, and requirements, and devise a training solution; practice as you feel inclined; practice with a purpose. Understand that there are many useful maneuvers/techniques, be effective by being selective. The principle of *simplicity of choice* implies that instinctive, natural, sub-conscious, spontaneous movements are the simplest, quickest, and most accurate while conscious choice reaction takes longer. Therefore, you should train yourself to cut down on unnecessary conscious choice reactions, and select the techniques that work for you carefully (**Fa Hui Ben Neng**, 发挥本能), and practice them repeatedly until they are second nature to you, until they become habit, until they become spontaneous reflexes. Concentrate on directing whole-body power to your impact point, cultivate/nurture the path-of-force-propagation, and pay absolutely no attention to formulated methodical routine or response sequences.

Your fundamental training and conditioning in relaxed-standing, trial-and-feel, footwork, and power release directly affect their effectiveness. Practice your maneuvers/techniques working with light as well as heavy resistance; executing them with and onto a live partner i.e., sparring is

bread and butter. Speed and strength is developed by rapid repetitions working against moderate to light resistance while power and endurance is developed by rapid repetitions working against a heavy weight. “*Burst in time interval*” training is the fastest method to improve skills. Keep all joints loose and extended to develop the spring-like, whip-like action for powerful strikes.

We repeat: the goal is to explore, experiment, and learn from experience; examine your ability to deliver your balanced-force *un*-consciously as spontaneous reaction to external stimuli and not to train for methodical routine or response sequences. Learn to initiate and control engagement opportunities by developing *agility*, the ability to rapidly switching from one maneuver to another. Whoever can handle the quickest rate of change usually will win.

We emphasize: Practicing *San Shou* (散手) techniques without a firm foundation of whole-body harmony and feel of the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) is of limited value. You must backup all your techniques with your balanced-force; deliver every blow by using your whole-body to propel the impact point. Small physical body movements, short travel distances (*Quan Da Cun Jing*, 拳打寸劲), very unified force (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一), and extremely high speed are crucial elements for a successful execution of a maneuver/technique (*Fa Li Xun Meng*, 发力迅猛).

诀曰:平时练习如临大敌之象,交手时有人若无人之境。

Oral Tradition: When practicing without an opponent, you should mentally rehearse sparring with imaginary ones. When sparring (or fighting), response spontaneously as if your opponent does not exist.

If you want to understand a maneuver/technique, take it to the extremes and examine its opposites. Begin practicing each technique with fixed-step large slow motions; slow is smooth; smooth is fast; eliminate all unnecessary movements and mental distractions (*You Yi Er Lian*, 有意而练). Then incorporate free-step footwork; then practice with small slow motions, large and small fast motions, power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力), and in combinations. Remember, do not merely imitate or mimic the external form; instead seek neuromuscular coordination and intense mental/physical harmony through kinesthetic experience (*Ti Ren*, 体认). Let your mind and body work in synch so the motions flow with no conscious effort. The goal is to develop your *un*-conscious spontaneous innate response abilities (*Wu Yi Er Yong*, 无意而用), to be able to release power from any part of your body in contact with your opponent and not to master any specific methodical routine; you must avoid formulated “if this then that” block and counter sequences. Maintain your posture and balance; release power explosively on contact, immediately relax and be ready to follow-up to release power again.

Though you start by practicing all maneuvers/techniques with slow large movements, you must remember that all attacking movements must be extremely fast, made as small as possible with the least deviation necessary and should be covered or augmented by defensive tactics (*Quan Da Cun Jing*, 拳打寸劲). Repetition is the mother of all skills and realistic training is the key to

any expertise. Use the following procedures as a guideline to devise your own *San Shou* (散手) training and conditioning regiment (also see an example of a training sequence in Appendix E):

**First Step:** Trial-and-feel with free-step Footwork (NLP Modeling and Imaging, *Dan Cao Shou Shi Li*, 单操手试力)

Motor learning process is different from intellectual learning. Mental visualization does not replace physical training.

决曰:人解不如自解,心解不如行解。

Oral Tradition: Having the solution explained is inferior to finding the solution by oneself. Intellectual comprehension is inferior to practical understanding obtained by experience through sparring.

Repetition is the mother of all skills; repetitive physical practice is required to ingrain a maneuver/technique. Trial-and-feel exercise helps your body learn proper form; let your body feel, explore, experiment, and learn from kinesthetic experience how each link moves in the proper concurrent overlapping sequence (*Ti Ren*, 体认). Thus, fixed-step slow repetitive physical practice is the “*beginning*” to imbed the move into your subconscious, making it instinctive, natural, spontaneous, and automatic. When the movements feel natural, advance to free-step, visualize sparring with an imaginary opponent. Always visualize you coming out on top; executing the maneuver/technique *correctly and successfully*. This positive visualization (guided imagery) will reinforce the signal to your brain; condition your nerves to fire in the correct sequence; your motions become fluid and coordinated, flowing with no conscious effort to deliver explosive bursts of balanced-force.

After gaining neuromuscular coordination of a maneuver/technique with slow large motions, repeat your practice with slow small motions, fast large motions, and small fast motions. Then advance from fixed-step to free-step and to soft and hard *Fa Li* (发力).

**Second Step:** Power Discharge/Release (*Fa Li*, 发力)

决曰:松多紧少。

Visualize sparring with your imaginary opponent; discharge/release your power using the selected maneuver/technique. Initially practice relaxed soft power releases (*Song De Fa Li*, 松的发力). Then practice focused (tense) hard power releases (*Jing De Fa Li*, 紧的发力). Finally practice “*explosive*” burst type pushing power releases (*Bao Fa Li*, 爆发力) onto a real partner (against resistance with proper protective equipment) and/or practice hitting/punching/striking type power releases into sandbags, etc. Control your balance, maintain stability; release your

multiple-direction balanced-force “*explosively*” on contact with a primary direction but with no absolute direction (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争). Maintain your posture, optimal *connected-ness* and *alignment*; keep all joints between 90 to 180 degrees (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直). Do not extend the palm of your striking arm beyond your front toe (except in an explosive push). Incorporate all the essential elements of the basic power release. Avoid long sequences of hard (tensed) power release practice as this will lead to rigidity (*Jiang*, 僵). Practicing several soft power releases interspersed with a hard one seem to produce good results.

### **Third Step:** Touch Sparring (*Qiang Bu*, 抢步) and Sparring (*Shi Zhan*, 实战)

**Touch Sparring (*Qiang Bu*, 抢步):** Practice with a partner/trainer. Stand in your constantly changing on-guard fighting posture; face your partner with your hands open, palms facing forward. Keep comfortable, natural and in-balance, do not have much weight on your heels, staying just out of distance. Using all practical footwork freely, move in to “attack” each others “targets” by attempting to lightly touching your opponent or substitute an explosive push for a strike/blow. Move with absolute freedom without any constrain. Use feints, draws, slips, ducks, bobs-and-weaves, parry and fend-off as appropriate to create engagement opportunities, to “protect” your “targets” and “touch attack” your opponent’s “targets”. Use your opponent’s guard; change incoming force direction to integrate push-hands and sparring techniques (*Tui Shou San Shou Jie He*, 推手散手结合). There is no win or lose. There is no shame in “losing”, only in failing to learn from the experience. The goal is to get a *feel* of your fighting measure, find your “first strike circle”, detect openings, and develop perception and control of engagement opportunities. Learn from your defeats and victories. Try to use all your maneuvers/techniques.

Do the exercise described above using explosive push as the final phase of your “attack”. Do not use punch, strike, kick, or hard-hitting blows. Always keep out of distance. A parry is most likely to succeed if it is made just as your opponent is ending his lunge (late and fast, 哄他旧力略过新力未发). You should attack during the opponent’s advance or change of distance towards you. At the precise moment your opponent lifts his foot to step, you can suddenly lunge forward into his step. When the correct distance is attained, carry through your attack with an instantaneous explosive burst of speed and energy.

**Sparring (*Shi Zhan*, 实战):** If you have any questions about a maneuver/technique, the answers can usually be found in sparring it out. The actual performance of a maneuver/technique depends on your opponent’s action and is unpredictable. Take the necessary safety precautions; use protective equipment for sparring, and spar with a cooperative partner/trainer. You need direct *feel* and perception to *fit in* with an opponent and response to his action. In the beginning, the partner/trainer must *nurse* (nurture) the trainee/student; do not use counter-techniques so the trainee/student will learn the proper complete execution of a new maneuver/technique. The trainee/student should always follow through by pushing/striking through your target. Do not get into the habit of holding back. In more advanced level training, the partner/trainer should use

counter techniques, the student should use appropriate forces in strikes and punches; react freely to counters and ripostes. Maintain proper strike quality and freedom of expression.

诀曰：哄他旧力略过新力未发。

Response to your opponent's actions with spontaneous reflexes; change and adapt according to your opponent; control engagement opportunities by rapidly switching between maneuvers. Avoid doing methodical routine and sequences. Do not reduce reality to a static routine and invent methodical procedural solutions. React spontaneously, instinctively, and instantaneously; make the proper moves at the proper time without conscious thinking, with no conscious effort; relegate your actions to your powerful *un*-conscious.

#### **Fourth Step:** Stationary Crisis Rehearsal and NLP Imaging (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌)

诀曰：平时练习如临大敌之象,交手时有人若无人之境。

Oral Tradition: When practicing without an opponent, you should mentally rehearse sparring with imaginary ones. When sparring (or fighting), response spontaneously as if your opponent does not exist.

Assume your on-guard fighting posture (*Niao Nan Fei Zhuang*, 鸟难飞桩). Without any physical movement, mentally visualize a crisis in which you need to fight. Your mind is most susceptible to visualization suggestions when you are *relaxed* and *still* (*Jing*, 静). Play a mental movie of the entire conflict/confrontation with you using the selected maneuver/technique; *executing it perfectly*. You must know the correct actions/movements of a maneuver before you can visualize using it. This crisis rehearsal, with you coming out on top, will send positive signals to your brain; reinforce and encode your neural transmitters, sensors and muscles to perform this maneuver/technique. This is called imaging in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). Large numbers of repetitive visualization will ingrain the skills to become spontaneous reflexes, help you to stay relaxed when you need to use the skills for real. It is important to be in control of your visual image; start with slow motion to picture the *successful execution* of each part of your maneuver or technique; speed up only when they become natural. Do not introduce any negative image. This mental practice is even more effective if you *feel* (kinesthetically perceive, *Ti Ren*, 体认) as well as *see* (visualize) the activities of the maneuver/technique you are mentally practicing. Be realistic and let the motions flow with no conscious effort. Visualize solutions consistent with your physical ability. Do not day dream and cheat yourself with self-delusion, i.e., visualizing motions that you cannot perform. Be positive, visualize successful execution; eliminate negative mental distractions.



**Fifth Step:** Shadow Boxing (*Ji Ying*, 击影) and Dynamic Crisis Rehearsal (*Jian Wu*, 健舞)

Shadow boxing (*Ji Ying*, 击影) builds up speed and agility. Imagine fighting all out with your worst enemy. Use your imagination to the utmost, visualize the moves of your imaginary opponent (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌) and work up to a real fighting frame of mind. Mix and combine your techniques; use free-stepping footwork. Be creative; keep the hands in subtle motion to overcome inertia. Do not set a pattern and do not set any rhythm with your movement. Use broken rhythm to simulate the bursts and stop activities of a real fight (*Zhi Pai Ren Jun Dou*, 知拍任君斗). Visualize multiple imaginary opponents. But be realistic when visualizing your abilities; do not let your mental demands exceed your physical capability. Do not day dream and cheat yourself with self-delusion, i.e., visualizing motions that you cannot perform. Do various combinations of techniques with utmost freedom of expression, rapidly switching between maneuvers. Whoever can handle the quickest rate of change (*agility*), not pure speed of execution, usually win.

诀曰:舒 适 自 然,若 无 其 事。

Remember optimal *connected-ness*, skeletal and body *alignment*, relaxed muscles, and harmony of actions add to speed; tension reduces speed and dissipates energy. Use your instinctive natural abilities as if nothing critical is happening.

**Important:** For all practical maneuvers/techniques, develop instinctive initiation from your on-guard position with no added movement. Acquire accuracy, speed, acceleration, power, and appropriate penetration. Be aggressive; use your full reach with perfect balance. Hit with full force and full distance, never pull your punches or strikes. Remember, mechanical repetitive realistic practices and will-power is the basis. Performance of skill must be comfortable, instinctive, natural, automatic, and the mind must be freed to solve the problem at hand. During fighting, do not think of how to fight but think of the weakness of the opponent, possible openings and opportunities; attack his strategy.

诀曰:若 以 目 之 所 见,一 再 思 察,然 后 出 手 以 应 敌,鲜 有 不 败 者。

Oral Tradition: If you use conscious procedural thinking (sequential processing) to observe, analyze, and then react, you will lose most of your hand-to-hand encounters or confrontations.

诀曰:应 机 而 发,因 势 而 变,不 加 思 索,顺 手 拈 来,不 期 然 而 然,莫 知 为 而 为。

Oral Tradition: Spontaneously change and adapt according to your opponent. Do not attempt conscious thinking; perform the proper maneuver at the proper time with no conscious intent or effort; with your conscious mind un-aware of its work, free your sub-conscious mind to act instinctively.

诀曰：不期自然至，变化形无形，周旋意无意。

Oral Tradition: Act spontaneously without your opponent being aware of your action, be versatile and flexible; maneuver sub-consciously with “mind-less mind”, do not be afraid to change your tactics.

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## Chapter 9: Tactics (*Zhan Lue*, 战略)

# 战 略

For self-defense (*Zi Wei*, 自卫), the best tactic is situational awareness and avoidance. However, once a fight for survival is underway, your best defense is a ferocious, vicious, no-holds-barred, aggressive offense. Though there are similarities, tactics and strategy for sports and competitions are different.

In this chapter, we will explore the basic tactics and strategy for self-defense.

### Principles

For self-defense (*Zi Wei*, 自卫), the best tactic is situational awareness and avoidance. Be alert and be aware of your surroundings, take steps to avoid altercations. Lower your victim profile by blending into the surrounding and employ situation control (e.g., choose when to be where) to minimize the chance of a conflict or an altercation. Always try to run your way out of a fight; in self-defense, your goal is to survive, do not die for your material properties; you should only fight when the consequences and demands are unacceptable (this is a personal judgment call), and you should fight only to the point necessary for escape.

If an altercation is unavoidable, you must evoke your “*confrontation response*”: Your initial response must be quick, take immediate action to stay ahead of the curve, this means attack first; your best defense is a pre-emptive vicious offense; action always beats reaction. Fight with maximum strength, ferocity, and viciousness to dominate your opponent. Explosive viciousness and ferocity often make up for flaws and sloppy-ness in your execution of maneuvers/techniques under great duress. Fight hard; stay on the balls of your feet; keep your opponent on the heels of his feet; walk violently into him with your whole-body balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) behind every blow; break his momentum; destroy his confidence. Your attitude makes the

difference; you must cultivate the courage, the will, the confidence to win, and the mental state to fully commit to your defense and survival. Without the willingness and resolve to use your skill to fight for your survival, then your skill really does not exist.

诀曰:对敌无胆向先,空自眼明手便。

Oral Tradition: Without the willingness and resolve to fight, all your physical abilities and skills are useless.

Prior to engagement, eliminate all negative mental distractions; you must visualize your success. In general, it is fatal to start a fight with a set plan. It is a combat axiom that no plan survives the initial contact. Instead you must be actively aware of the changing situation, be ever flexible, and respond spontaneously to changing circumstances in an infinite variety of ways.

诀曰:应机而发,因势而变。

Oral Tradition: Be agile; change and adapt to act on all engagement opportunities; respond to circumstances spontaneously.

Expect your opponent to be complex, adaptive and nonlinear; adapt and change according to your opponent. Be mentally and physically agile, think faster and move at a different tempo than your opponent to compress his time-scale (i.e., use broken rhythm; *Zhi Pai Ren Jun Dou*, 知拍任君斗), to disorient him.

You must have technical ability (basic skills) before you can apply fighting tactics to take advantage of the weakness of your opponent. Proper “*whole-body mechanics*” must become instinctive and natural to free your powerful *un*-conscious mind to concentrate on discovering your opponent’s reactions and intentions, and devising the strategy and tactics to beat him (i.e., attack his strategy).

NOTES: Do not practice competitive sparring until you have mastered the basic skills to maintain optimal *alignment*, proper *connected-ness*, and move with whole-body neuromuscular coordination to take up power from the ground. Skills must become spontaneous reflexes before they are useful in combat.

## Combat Mindset

In combat, individuals first *Observe* and *Orient* themselves so they can understand the situation, then they make a *Decision* to direct their activities, and then they take *Action* (OODA cycle – John Boyd). The combat mindset (courage, will, and confidence to win) and the efficient irregular use of this nonlinear OODA cycle are essential to success/victory. You must develop the ability to initiate and control engagement opportunities by operating at a faster tempo inside

your opponent's time scale to generate confusion and disorder (time-based fast transient tactic) in order to defeat him (*Zhi Pai Ren Jun Dou*, 知拍任君斗).

诀曰:若以目之所见,一再思察,然后出手以应敌,鲜有不败者。

**Oral Tradition:** If you use conscious procedural thinking (sequential processing) to observe, analyze, and then decide and act, you will lose most of your hand-to-hand encounters or confrontations.

In a hand-to-hand conflict/confrontation, whether you are aware of it or not, you will move through this nonlinear OODA cycle irregularly, sub-consciously. Once the fight is underway, due to the compressed time scale, you must relegate this OODA cycling to the parallel process of your powerful *un*-conscious mind (*Wu Yi Si*, 无意识). If you use your conscious mind to observe and analyze your opponent's action and then decide and act using linear sequential processing, most likely you will lose the fight. In this compressed time scale, your *un*-conscious mind recalls, makes decision, and takes action from prior meaningful decision-making reference points (*Wu Yi Er Yong*, 无意而用). When there is no prior reference point, you will become disoriented. Therefore, you must create valid decision-making reference points ahead of time with realistic training and conditioning with sparring (*Shi Zhan*, 实战) and crisis rehearsal (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌), and draw from your experience. You fight like you trained.

Let us briefly explore the different phases of your *un*-conscious nonlinear OODA cycle:

**Observe:** The time it takes to gather and process information is as important as the manner. In hand-to-hand altercations, your main sensory system is your vision. Prior to engagement, watch your opponent; study his characteristics, stance, and fighting measure. Never look away from him during the fight. In the far interval, watch his eyes. In the close interval, watch his waist, chest, elbows, or feet. Always, maintain a state of relaxed awareness; observe and analyze your opponent sub-consciously. Don't let fear freeze you in place. Constantly change the interval, timing, and angle from your opponent. Observe with both your eyes and your hands; observe your opponent's attributes, abilities, and styles. Use false attacks to force your opponent to reveal the quality and speed of his actions. Learn his timing. Feel his strengths and weaknesses (perception and situational awareness), both mentally and physically.

**Orient:** Orient yourself to understand the situation. Take the initiative to disorient your opponent. Do the unexpected; mix feints, beat, and attacks to draw a reaction. Look for cues, change lines and positions; do not give your opponent a free moment to seize the initiative. You cannot be passive; instead you must initiate and control engagement opportunities, to switch from one maneuver/technique to another more rapidly than your opponent (compressing his time scale), interrupt and get inside his OODA cycle to disorient him. Remain calm; adopt the small step on-guard fighting posture but be comfortable, natural, and relaxed - as opposed to rigid/tensed - but not slackened or physically lax. Mentally and physically you want to dominate your opponent; have the courage, will, and confidence to win. Continuously change your orientation with sub-conscious updates and inputs from observations to overwhelm your

opponent's ability to adapt to change. Every time he attempts to re-orient, attack something else to distort his orientation (*Pai Wei*, 拍位). Combat is based on deception.

**Decide:** Through crisis rehearsal, visualize fighting and sparring with imaginary opponents (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌), you have established meaningful *un*-conscious decision-making reference points; eliminated all unnecessary actions and negative mental distractions. You have been there; done that; and can handle the situation, visualized your success. Analyze your opponent but relegate your spontaneous response to your powerful *un*-conscious decision-making references; use the proper action at the proper time with no conscious intent (*Yi Wu Yi*, 意无意). Discover his weaknesses; make him fight the type of bout he fights worst. Keep him guessing what you are going to do next. Don't give him rest, run on him, hit from all angles. Achieve a more effective OODA cycle than your opponent; destroy his confidence.

**Act:** When engaged, your powerful *un*-conscious mind and harmonized whole-body would take over, fired up and execute the appropriate technique perfectly, acting decisively, spontaneously with no conscious thinking. Concentrate, be totally in the present, be *in the zone* (*De Li*, 得力); don't worry about the outcome. What you can do prior to or in the future are irrelevant at this point. The execution of the attack must be done with proper timing, quickly, without hesitation (openings are fleeting), and with maximum force. Keep moving; make your opponent miss narrowly. Circle and side-step rushes. Follow up on your advantages. When he is off balance, be all over him; walk violently into him with your whole-body balanced-force behind your blows; stay on your toes and keep him on his heels. Don't waste motion. Don't *telegraph* punches; attack with confidence, accuracy, speed, and whole-body balanced-force. Deal with changes with your sub-conscious mind; whoever can handle the quickest rate of change has the advantage. Stay inside your opponent's OODA cycle, change your efforts and maneuvers as your opponent change to adapt, make him play catch-up; respond to changing circumstances with total freedom in an infinite variety of ways.

诀曰:应机而发,因势而变,不加思索,顺手拈来,不期然而然,莫知为而为。

**Oral Tradition:** Do not attempt conscious thinking. Perform the proper maneuver at the proper time spontaneously with no conscious mind-intent. With your conscious mind *un*-aware of its work, free your *un*-conscious mind to act instinctively.

Your actions must flow freely with a free mind and in accord with all changes. Your actual performance depends on your opponent's actions, which cannot be predicted. Unpredictability means the OODA cycle is a complex nonlinear multi-dimensional feedback loop. The ability to sense, adapt, and change according to your opponent (*agility*) is crucial for success/victory. To adapt and change, you cannot be passive; instead you must initiate and control engagement opportunities, to switch from one maneuver/technique to another more rapidly than your opponent (compressing his time scale) to generate confusion. Know your opponent's timing (*Zhi Pai*, 知拍) and then use a timing your opponent does not expect so he finds that it is always

too late for him to readjust. That is, operate at a quicker and different tempo, not just moving faster, is the essence of Yiquan's time-based fast transient tactic.

诀曰:不期自然至,变化形无形,周旋意无意。

Oral Tradition: Act spontaneously without your opponent being aware of your action, be versatile and flexible; maneuver sub-consciously with mind-less mind, do not be afraid to change your tactics.

诀曰:因敌变化示神奇。

Oral Tradition: The ability to sense, adapt and change according to your opponent (*agility*) is genius. It is crucial for success/victory.

## Combat Tactics (*Shi Zhan Zhan Lue*, 实战战略)

Combat is based on deception. Tactics are based on observation and analysis of your opponent and selecting the appropriate actions (OODA cycle). While no one single tactic is always applicable, in general, you must first control the *interval* (distance) with footwork; then lead your opponent's rhythm, learning his timing with feints and false attacks (*Zhi Pai Ren Jun Dou*, 知拍任君斗). The fundamental tactic is to draw your opponent to step forward, or pressure him to step backward, or to make him narrowly miss, and counter attack him as he steps; attack him in between his maneuvers in a combination (*Jiu Li Lue Guo Xin Li Wei Sheng Shi*, 旧力略过新力未生时). Never use more complex movements than are necessary to achieve the desired result. The more complicated the move, the more chance of counter-offensive movement; the attack must remain simple. You must have acquired appropriate neuromuscular coordination and basic performance skills to free your sub-conscious mind to concentrate on the solution to your opponent's attack and defense, to attack his strategy. A few principles you should adhere to faithfully are:

诀曰:法欲简。

1. Keep all movements gross and simplistic; simple is good. You must be able to execute your maneuvers/techniques under great duress. React spontaneously, instinctively; use the proper action at the proper time with no conscious intent and/or deliberate conscious thinking. Eliminate all unnecessary motion.

诀曰：用全力。

2. Deliver all your blows with maximum whole-body balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) behind them. Attack with your body as one harmonized spring-like whole-body propelling the different impact weapons (hands, feet, elbows, knees, shoulders, and head) into your opponent. Always use maximum effort and capability, do not develop the habit of holding back because you will not be able to turn-on your power when you need it.

诀曰：力透敌背。

3. Punch soft-tissue targets but use open-hand on hard targets. Maintain acceleration while on contact and penetrate to the back of the target or push through the target. Make your reach good; never pull your punches.

诀曰：见虚不击，击实处，要知实处正是虚。

诀曰：桥来桥上过。

4. Don't wait for or aim at an opening. Initiate changes and attacks, and control engagement opportunities. Use your opponent's guard against him. Take the initiative and force the reaction of your opponent by smashing into his guard. Create opening by striking into guards then follow with additional attacks to opening lines. Do the unexpected, go where your opponent isn't, if he is high then go low, if he goes right then go left. Use lead, feint, draw, stop-hit, and counter as appropriate. Combat is based on deception.

Example (*Heng Xiang Zai Quan*, 横向栽拳): Fighters tend to bounce their hands up and down. As those hands come up, throw a quick lateral hook into their guards. You may score as their hands go down, or you may smash into their guard arms/hands (*Du Da*, 堵打) creating an opening. Follow through with additional attacks or pull hands back to shield your mouth/throat area.

诀曰：先发制人。

5. Whenever possible attack first; action beats reaction. Always fight at maximum strength, ferocity, viciousness, and capability. Try to strike, gouge, scratch, and/or attack your opponent's eyes, side of the neck, and other vulnerable points. Attack your opponent during his preparation (stop-hit) before he zeros in on you (*Du Da*, 堵打; *Jie Da*, 截打).



6. Attack when your opponent is preoccupied, when he is preparing his offensive (*Du Da*, 堵打), on his advance, on his retreat, on his absence of touch (disconnect from the point of contact), on his engagement, and on attempt to change.

诀曰：不招不架，只是一下，犯了招架，就有十下。

7. Don't try to block; blocking is not a viable concept. Sequential patterns of response (e.g., “if this then that”) and using conscious thinking are unrealistic in the compressed time scale of hand-to-hand combat. Use stop-hit: Keep your defensive on-guard position and walk violently into your attacker with full body weight blows from your feet, knees, shoulders, elbows, and hands. You may sustain hits and glancing blows but your natural reactions (*Shen Fa Bian Hua*, 身法变化) of rolling with incoming punches will minimize the effects of these strikes.
8. Side-step, sway or step back to move from the line of force then step forward and counter attack. Recognize and use the “zones” where your opponent's strike has not attained or has passed its maximum striking force; stop a punch before it develops by jamming an attacker's limb (*Du Da*, 堵打) or pass a fully developed strike (*Shan Da*, 闪打).
9. Raise a knee to avoid or cushion a kick. Parry or fend-off punches with twisting forearm shields or articulated elbows. Keep elbows articulated; tuck your elbows into your short ribs and turn your torso to “fend-off” middle zone attacks; raise elbows to deflect blows to your head. Then step in and counter attack.
10. Parry by deflecting a strike with your forearm or elbow laterally, upward, or downward (*Jie Da*, 截打). Twist and rotate your parrying forearm. Strike with maximum force or push hard to throw your opponent off balance; stay on the balls of your feet; keep your opponent on the heels of his feet. Double (two hands) inside-to-outside parry will open your opponent's central line to an attack.
11. “Block” horizontal elbow with vertical elbow, and vice versa.
12. Smother a flurry of strikes by clinching and/or hugging. Escape clinching by upward *drilling* (*Zuan Quan*, 钻拳) strike to your opponent's chin/nose (chin-jab) or upward knee strike (spike) with up-turned toe to strike his groin.
13. Close the *interval*; get in and stay in your opponent's face. *Explode* and close relentlessly; keep attacking your opponent at close range until he breaks down. It takes skill to get in close and stay there.

14. To retreat from kicks is to give your opponent room, it is sometimes better to jam and smother his preparation – rush in close and destroy his balance by attacking his supporting leg.

NOTES: Yiquan tactics is a time-based theory of hand-to-hand combat in the *Mind-Time-Space* continuum. The goal: Attack your opponent's strategy; operate at a faster and different tempo inside your opponent's time scale to generate confusion and disorder. He who can handle the quickest rate of change wins. For example, rapidly switching from a backward downward *Fa Li* maneuver to an upward forward punch may generate enough confusion for you to score.

You cannot predict what your opponents will do, but the outcome of an encounter is determined by your opponent's action. The ability to gain victory by changing and adapting according to your opponent is called "genius" (*Shen Qi*, 神奇). To adapt to change, you cannot be passive; instead you must take the initiative and control engagement opportunities. Hand-to-hand combat is based on deception and being "form-less" (*Xing Wu Xing*, 形无形) prevents your opponent from formulating a plan to attack you. You must become "form-less" (*You Xing Lian Dao Wu Xing*, 有形练到无形) and develop the ability to *perceive* and *feel* your opponent, to detect and exploit openings while they still present opportunities. Act without a *sticking mind*, making decisions without hesitations, use the proper action at the proper time with no conscious intent (不期自然至). Complex sequences or patterns cannot adapt to a rapidly changing opponent.

诀曰:若以目之所见,一再思察,然后出手以应敌,鲜有不败者。

Oral Tradition: If you use conscious procedural thinking (sequential processing) to observe, analyze, and then decide and act, you will lose most of your hand-to-hand encounters or confrontations.

Use your mind, think, and analyze the principles, tactics, and training methods during practice. Be creative; absorb new stuff. If it works, do it, develop it. You must create decision-making reference points ahead of time using mental crisis rehearsal and imaginary opponents (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌). Visualize fighting your strongest enemy during solo trial-and-feel exercises of fighting maneuvers (*Dan Cao Shou*, 单操手); visualize your success. Without establishing these decision-making references ahead of time, you will be disoriented and confused in an altercation. In other words, you fight like you trained.

## Methods and Procedures

For the remainder of this chapter, let us explore in detail the concepts of timing, preparation, evasiveness, and the different types of attacks in relation to fighting tactics.

## Timing (*Shi Ji*, 时机)

Timing, the choice of time, is the key factor in a conflict/confrontation (*Zhi Pai Ren Jun Dou*, 知拍任君斗). Attacks will generally fail unless they are delivered at the proper moment (timing) and at the proper speed (cadence). The appropriate timing can only be learned (*Zhi Pai*, 知拍) through real experience from push-hands and sparring training and conditioning.

诀曰:若能出手而得已发未发时机之扼要,则非久经实作之惯手难能得也。

Oral Tradition: Push-hands and sparring practices are the most direct paths to gain real fighting experiences. Mastering timing and control of engagement opportunities come from prolong diligent push-hands and sparring practices.

诀曰:攻防要在他旧力略过新力未生时。

Oral Tradition: Offensive and defensive moves are most effective if executed when your opponent switches between maneuvers/techniques.

Preferred moments to attack your opponent are:

1. When he steps forward or backwards, or
2. When he is pre-occupied with feinting, or
3. On his preparation of attack, or
4. When he is between two moves of a combination.

NOTES: Attack on preparation is not an attack into an attack; it is an interception (*Du Da*, 堵打). When your opponent is preparing an attack, his attention and hand movements will be momentarily concentrated on setting up an attack and not on defense.

Example 1: Time your attack to move toward a target from which your opponent's guard hand is moving away, strike into an opening line rather than a closing line.

Example 2:

- a. A *Stop-hit* (*Jie Ji*, 截击; *Jie Da*, 截打) is a timed hit against your opponent at the same time he is making an attack. It intercepts his final line and stops your opponent in the development of his attack. Correct timing and distance is

essential to land your punch ahead of his focus. *Stop-hit (Jie Da, 截打)* is most useful against attacks that begin with a forward step.

- b. *Counter-time* means first gaining control of your opponent's "*movement time*" and/or hand position before making your attack. Induce your opponent to attack, then, take possession of the opposing hand or detaching it, using his guard against him, and executing a subsequent attack. From the normal on-guard position, you can parry an attack by a lateral hand movement of only a few inches while the attacker's hand has to move several feet, use this disparity in *movement time* to your advantage.

## Preparation

When in the *far interval* (out of distance), you must cover the distance by preparation, bridging the gap. Basically, the preparation makes an opening by deception, by distracting the opponent, paving the way for you to "rush in" and attack. Usually it consists of a series of steps forward and backward, or lateral steps of varying length corkscrewing inwards, to draw within distance.

When in range, preparation includes a series of false attacks, feints and/or beats and engagements to fix the opponent's hand in a particular line or to slow his reactions to gain *movement time*. To defend against kicks, preparation on the opponent's knee, trapping his hand or foot will reduce the *movement time* factor.

**Feints (Yang Gong, 佯攻):** The feint is a false, deceiving strike that appears so real that it induces your opponent into a reaction. The objectives of the feint are:

1. To open the line for the intended attack, or
2. To distract your opponent while closing the distance, or
3. To deceive the induced parry, to trap and hit.

诀曰:未进关手宜轻虚,已进关手宜重实。

The feint must be long and penetrating to draw a parry or a reaction; the real hit that follows must be fast and decisive to avoid the parry. If an opponent doesn't react to feints, use straight simple angle attacks. Do not do repetitive feints with no follow-up real hits.

**Parry:** To neutralize a blow (strike or punch), evading is better than parrying and parrying is better than blocking. To parry an attack, sweep away (lateral, semi-circular, circular) the strike/punch by the shortest route with your twisting hand/forearm and merely close the line or deflect the opponent's hand, make him narrowly miss, do not swing too wide. Parry a strike at the last moment when it is closed to the body (parry late and fast) with the smallest movement. When parrying with a step backwards, adjust to the length of your opponent's movement and take the parry as the rear foot lift off the ground to move backwards. Do not practice parrying without a counter attack (riposte).

诀 曰: 旧 力 略 过, 新 力 未 发。

To be effective, the parry and the counter attack must be made as your opponent's attack is ending (旧力略过) and before your opponent changes from offense to defense (新力未发). Timing is important.

**Beat:** The beat is a crisp sharp arm movement made close to your opponent's hand to knock it aside. The objectives of the beat are:

1. To open the line by the right amount of force, or
2. As a feint to draw a reaction, or
3. As an invitation to beat back or draw an attack.

Make the beat from your on-guard position into the line in which the hands are engaged; then, follow the beat with indirect or compound attacks.

**Immobilization:** Immobilization includes any engagement that reduces your opponent's *movement time*. The objectives are:

11. To fix the opponent's hand and foot in a particular line, or
2. To slow his reactions by trapping his hand or foot.

“*Stick*” to your opponent, smother an attack and follow a withdrawal to gain *movement time*.  
“*Lock*” his joints by extending them to the extreme limit or compressing them into their socket.

诀 曰: 沾 连 粘 随。

NOTES: All Push-hands techniques may be used as preparation to gain *movement time* for the fast and decisive real hits that follow. Use your opponent's guard against him. Controlling your opponent without striking is loss of opportunity.

## Evasiveness

Pure defensive techniques (blocking and evasion) are not viable; you do not win fights with pure defense. It is better to use footwork (diagonal steps, side steps) and mobility to evade than to fend-off, parry, or block. The goal is to keep your hands free while evading, causing your opponent to miss narrowly so you can simultaneously counter attack. Do not practice evasiveness without a riposte, counter hitting or kicking. You need to close the *interval* quickly and/or remain in striking range to integrate your defense and offense (*Gong Shou He Yi*, 攻守合一). Expect to take glancing blows because no one can completely avoid being hit.

**Slip:** Slipping (*Yao Bi*, 摇避; *Shan Da*, 闪打) is reflexive reaction to minimizing the effect of an attack without moving out of range, and leaving both hands free to counter. It is faster and requires less effort to accomplish than parry. Be sure to hold hands high in on-guard position and roll with punches to minimize the effects of landing (glancing) blows.

Examples:

To avoid a straight lead (Jab), there are four possibilities from a right lead on-guard posture:

- a. **Slipping inside a left lead:** As your opponent leads a straight left, side-step to your left, shift your weight backwards onto your rear left leg, *drill* and push off your right foot (twisting your right knee inwards and right heel outward; *Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), turn your torso to the left and pivot your right shoulder inwards to let the blow slip over your right shoulder. (Riposte: Right lead, right hand straight punch.)
- b. **Slipping outside a left lead:** As your opponent leads a straight left, side-step to your right, shift your weight right and forward over your lead right leg, pivot your left shoulder forward to slip the blow over your left shoulder. You may take a short step diagonally forward and/or to the right with your leading right foot; push off your left foot, twisting your left knee inward and left heel outward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋). (Riposte: Right lead, rear left hand straight punch.)
- c. **Slipping inside a right lead:** As your opponent leads a straight right, shift your weight over your lead right leg, moving your body slightly to the right and forward, pivot to your right, bring your left shoulder forward to slip your opponent's right straight punch over your left shoulder. Taking a short step diagonally forward and/or to the right with your right foot, rotating your left hip inward and bending your left knee twisting your left knee inward and left heel outward slightly will put you in the inside position to attack. (Riposte: Right lead, rear left hand straight punch.)

- d. **Slipping outside a right lead:** As your opponent leads a straight right, shift your weight back to your rear left leg, turn your left toe inward; pivot to your right to turn your torso and right shoulder to the right to slip your opponent's right straight punch over your right shoulder. (Riposte: Right lead, rear left hook over your opponent's right shoulder.)

Always hit on the slip, especially when moving forward. With the exception of case (d), the shoulder over which you slip a blow and the foot twist (*drill*) are on the same side.

NOTES: By going to the outside, you effectively *eliminate* one of your opponent's hands.

**Duck:** Ducking (*Xia Qian*, 下潜) is dropping the body forward under swings and hooks aimed at the head while keeping in range to counter.

**Bob and Weave:** Swaying (*Dong Dang*, 动荡) makes you more difficult to hit and gives you more power with the hook. "Bobbing" means sinking under the swing or hook with controlled movement leaving the hands open for attack. Maintain normal feet positions; use your knees to provide the motion. Be able to "slip" at any stage of the "bob". "Weave" is based on the "slip" and is a circular movement of the upper trunk and head from side to side making your head a moving target. "Bob and weave" are normally used together to slide under your opponent's attack into close quarters.

Examples:

- a. **Weave to the inside:** On a right lead, slip to the outside, drop and move under the extended right lead and then up to the inside. Carry your hands high; place your right open hand on his left to immobilize it. Your opponent's right lead is over your left shoulder. Or counter with a right on the slip and a left and right as you weave.
- b. **Weave to the outside:** On a right lead, slip inside and place your open hand on your opponent's left to immobilize it. Drop and move your head to the left and upward in a circular movement to the outside. His right lead is over your right shoulder. Carry your hands high. Or counter with a left on the slip and right and left on the weave.

Break your rhythm, do not be a rhythmic *bobber-weaver*. Expect to take glancing blows because no one can completely avoid being hit. Study the *Bobbing-turtle* (*Shen Gui Chu Shui Shi Li*, 神龟出水试力) exercise to perfect your bob and weave (*Shen Fa Zhuan Huan*, 身法转换).

# Attack

Conserve your energy but attack ferociously, viciously, aggressively, decisively, and confidently with proper timing, distance, and angle when an opening appears; do not hesitate. Action beats reaction. Do not hold back. Be mentally and physically alert throughout the fight, initiate changes and control engagement opportunities. The attack could be preceded by a preparation beat, press, feint, etc., to disorient and confuse your opponent. All attacking movements must be made as small as possible with the least deviation necessary and should be covered or augmented by defensive tactics simultaneously. Keep relaxed before your strike connects; tense and accelerate through your target on contact (先软后硬).

诀曰: 拳打寸劲。

Oral Tradition: Deliver your punches within inches from your targets.

## Simple Attack: Simple with speed (*Kuai Gong*, 快攻)

诀曰: 先发制人。

Oral Tradition: Action beats reaction. Start and finish your attacks before your opponent realize it.

**Attack at an angle:** After a series of feints or false attacks, your opponent will sub-consciously expect more preparation and may fail to react in time to a fast simple attack at an unexpected angle. Adjust the distance and the angle with your footwork.

**Attack an opening line:** When your opponent is moving his arm away from the line in which you wish to attack, he must reverse his action in order to defend. Before he can parry, attack without disguising the direction of the attack. Rely on speed.

**Attack by drawing:** Expose some targets to draw an attack. Be able to advance while open to attack but be ready to counter is a very advance level of fighting. Lure your opponent to commit himself to a decided step. His commitment will deprive him the ability to change his position or guard swiftly enough to deal with your fast attack.

Example: Induce your opponent to step forward into the *within distance area* and hit him while he is shifting his weight forward. Thus, you *borrow force* to add to the power of your strike.

Stay relaxed. Maintain relaxed loose-ness and whole-body harmony to deliver explosive power with smooth-ness, precision, and speed. The secrets of hard hitting are: confidence, timing,



accuracy, and whole-body coordination to take up power from the ground (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao Yi Guan*, 整体协调一贯).

## Deceive Attack: Feint and Disengagement (*Yang Gong*, 佯攻)

Between opponents of approximately the same physical ability, an attack can rarely succeed unless it deceives the defense, catching him in a moment of physical and/or mental unpreparedness. Use false attacks and feints to misdirect your opponent's attention, to make him hesitate before he can be sure of his cue to act. Although he can see the outward aspects, confuse him on the ways you will take to achieve victory i.e., gain advantage by inducing him to make a preliminary motion in an appropriate direction.

**Feint Attack:** Feinting deceives your opponent and creates momentary openings. Instant reflex action is necessary to take advantage of these. The essential elements are rapidity, change, deception, and precision, switching swiftly between maneuvers. Feint before your real attack to induce your opponent to parry to protect a certain line. By deceiving him, you attack in another line. Sometimes feints in the high line can pave the way for sudden disengagement and to attack the knee (high/low, low/high). Do the unexpected, go where your opponent isn't, if he is high then go low, if he goes right then go left, etc.

**Disengagement Attack:** Feint to misdirect your opponent's reaction, disengage to hit an opening line or gain *movement time*. Do not wait for his parry, keep ahead of it and complete your attack. Whoever can handle the quickest rate of change, wins. You must start your offense while his arm is traveling across, downward, or upward. Thus, for a moment, his defense is moving in opposite direction to your attack. Disengagement should pass very close to the opponent's hand with the least deviation necessary to induce the opponent to react (small movement).

**Broken Rhythm Attack:** Establish a false timing for your opponent; then use a timing your opponent does not expect. A series of slowed down feints and slow gaining of ground may put your opponent to *sleep*. Breaking rhythm by sudden high-speed movement may take him by surprise. A broken rhythm attack can be effective in deceiving your opponent of your intention.

## Forced Attack: Beat or Immobilization (*Qiang Gong*, 强攻)

诀曰: 见虚不击, 击实处, 要知实处正是虚, 虚实转移枢纽处, 若非久历永不知。

Oral Tradition: Do not hit into closing lines; hit into opening lines. Smash into blocks to create openings for follow-up attacks. You must gain real experience with sparring training. Knowing when and where to take the appropriate actions, to sense, adapt, and

change according to your opponent, can only come from real experience obtained from diligent practice.

**Beat Attack:** Attack your opponent's hand with sufficient force to turn it aside, make an opening for your real attack. An opponent may habitually withdraw his hand or foot when a hit is directed towards it, immediately follow his withdrawal and attack his center. Don't let him recover.

**Immobilization Attack:** Apply immobilizing preparation on your opponent's hand, leg, etc., to crash the line to engagement. Use your opponent's guard to your advantage. When attacking with one hand (substantial hand), pin with the other (insubstantial hand). When slipping, use immobilization to prevent counter.

诀曰：双手齐出，单手独进。

Oral Tradition: Use both hands simultaneously; advance one hand (substantial hand) to attack, use the other (insubstantial hand) to guard, immobilize, and/or follow-up.

## Compound Attack: Combination

**Attack by Combination:** Use a series of *set-up* blows in a natural sequence to maneuver your opponent, to create an opening for the final blow on a selected vulnerable target. It seems natural to:

1. Punch straight (jab) and then follow with straight punch, or hook, or downward punch, or upward punch,
2. Punch high (head) then follow with low (body), and vice versa.

But you must consider the various paths of combinations and be able to change paths during an execution, responding to circumstances spontaneously in an infinite variety of ways.

Examples:

- a. Upward *drill* forearm parry (*Heng Quan*, 横拳) and straight punch (*Zhi Quan*, 直拳) or upward punch (*Zuan Quan*, 钻拳),
- b. Back-fist strike (*Zuan Fan Heng Quan*, 钻翻横拳) and straight punch or downward chopping strike (*Pi Quan*, 劈拳),
- c. Lateral parry and straight punch, or forward downward punch, or uppercut, or lateral hook.

- d. Downward chop parry and straight punch,
- e. Upward *drill* parry and straight punch,
- f. Downward back fist and forward downward punch,
- g. Upward back fist and upper cut,
- h. Right straight/left cross (the 1-2 punch),
- i. Right straight/right upper cut,
- j. Right straight/left cross/right hook,

Never use more complex movements than are necessary to achieve the desired result. The more complicated, the more chance of counter-offensive movement, the attack must remain simple (*Fa Yu Jian*, 法欲简).

**Renewed Compound attack:** An opponent may lean back on his rear leg when defending an initial attack instead of taking a short step back. In such cases, you must attack the rear weight-bearing foot. He must not be allowed to regain any loss of balance (physical or mental) and/or control that the initial attack has achieved.

**Recover Forward Compound Attack:** This is an attack on your opponent's limbs. It is used to fill in the time lag of a recovery from a missed attack, occupying his mind during that period, minimizing the risk of a *stop-hit* or finding some support by holding his limbs during recovery. Seize your attacker's limb and pull him onto your counter attack.

Example 1: To counter a swing kick, jam your opponent's leg in mid-swing, hook an elbow under his leg/foot and press down on his knee to lock his leg. Downward elbow strike his leg. Kick his supporting leg. Attack targets on his central line.

Example 2: Lock your attacker's arm under your armpit; push up at his elbow to lock his arm. Elbow attack his arm or central line.

诀曰: 来 留 去 送。

Oral Tradition: Smother or cover an incoming attack to gain movement time and stick, follow, and add force to an outgoing withdrawal to overwhelm your opponent.

## Counter Attacks

The counter attack uses your opponent's offense as a means to complete your own attack. When your opponent attacks, he exposes more openings than when he is remaining on-guard. Any commitment opens a target area. Observe your opponent's hand movements when he recovers from an unsuccessful attack; counter attack in between his maneuvers (*Zhi Pai Ren Jun Dou*, 知拍任君斗). Make him narrowly miss by slipping, ducking, drawing or deflecting. Then counter by hitting your opponent while he is out of position as a result of missing. Act spontaneously, instinctively, and instantaneously using your *un*-conscious response developed through training and conditioning (established decision-making reference points). Counter attack requires exact timing, judgment of distance, and a specific spontaneous response to a specific stimulus/lead (*Pai Wei*, 拍位); it is a conditioning reflex. Get your answers from sparring.

Conditioning reflex mean: Practice a response to a stimulus, slowly, repetitively to create an automatic reaction (reflex) in the sub-conscious nervous system (decision-making reference points). Such action is instantaneous and is necessary for effective countering i.e., skills must become spontaneous reflexes. Repetition is the mother of all skills and realistic training and conditioning is the key to any expertise.

决曰：人解不如自解，心解不如行解。

Oral Tradition: Having the solution explained is inferior to finding the solution by oneself. Intellectual comprehension is inferior to practical understanding obtained by sparring.

You may counter (Yiquan's three hits; *San Da*, 三打):

- a. **On Preparation:** Check his preparation movement, smother his action before he completes his plan (*Du Da*, 堵打).
- b. **On Development:** Intercept his arms/legs as he begins his attack (*Jie Da*, 截打); countering the attack before his strike reaches its "*strike zone*".
- c. **On Completion:** Pass and deflect your opponent's attack (after its "*strike zone*") changing his force direction and counter while he is extended or during his recovery (*Shan Da*, 闪打).

By bobbing and weaving (*Shen Gui Chu Shui Shi Li*, 神龟出水试力) to evade/escape a strike, you may remain in range for a counter. By slipping (weaving) sideways and slightly forward (with diagonal steps) you may pivot on your lead foot, twisting your torso to avoid an attack without moving out of range. Get in close and stay there.

## Summary

Build your combat mindset with relaxed-standing exercises with crisis rehearsal. Play mental movies of different scenarios to build your combat mindset, confidence, and *confrontation response*. Create *un-conscious* decision-making reference points; always visualize your success. This will decrease the lag time of your response; overcome your *startled response*. Keep your response simple with emphasis on feeling the interacting of the forces of your opponent. Always visualize your defenses and attacks are successful to positively reinforce your confidence. Do not waste your time thinking up complicated methodical routine sequences.

诀曰:万不可走入招式断续的方法。

Oral Tradition: Do not cultivate sequential patterns of response as methods of solution to the non-static problems of fighting.

Remember to question everything: think and practice; practice and think. During training and conditioning, always ask yourself: Why do you do this move? What is the purpose? Learn from the works of previous practitioners/masters. While their writing/teaching contain valuable information, some of them may be wrong. You must be selective, absorb and develop the useful and discard the errors. Practice as you feel inclined.

诀曰:有法而练,无意而用,发挥本能。

Do not be completely and rigidly bounded by the theory and principles set forth in this or any other system; you must change them to suit yourself as necessary. Do not always imitate and mimic your teacher; be creative. By not condoning a single rule (*Yi Fa Bu Li*, 一法不立), you are freed to adopt all rules and develop your own specialty (*Wu Fa Bu Rong*, 无法不容).

Practice and think! You need repeated lessons; you need to re-learn lessons to ingrain them. Intellectual knowledge can only be translated to physical performance by practice. Mental visualization/training cannot replace physical training/conditioning. You must let your mind-body feel and kinesthetically experience the Yiquan method. It takes concentrated attention and effort to re-pattern your behavior (mind-body) to use whole-body neuromuscular coordination, to cultivate the path-of-force-propagation and to ingrain a technique. Think and practice! Repetition is the mother of all skills; realistic training leads to expertise.

诀曰:应在实战中体认,虚实转移枢纽处,若非久历永不知。

Oral Tradition: Knowing when and where to take the appropriate actions, to sense, adapt, and change according to your opponent, can only come from real experience obtained from diligent sparring practice.



## Chapter 10: Conclusion (*Jie Lun*, 结论)

# 结 论

There are as many methods of teaching/training as there are teachers/trainees. The important things are to understand the Yiquan theories and principles and put them into practice; adhere faithfully to the true principles of reality-based martial arts training and conditioning (*Quan Quan Fu Ying*, 拳拳服膺), and cultivate/develop/strengthen your mental/intentional component of your mind, to develop your spontaneous innate instinctive fighting maneuvers/techniques (*Fa Hui Ben Neng*, 发挥本能). Comprehension and adherence to the principles and theories allow you to invent, change, and refine techniques and tactics. Set realistic reachable goals, practice and train as you feel inclined to develop your natural attributes of strength, speed, endurance, flexibility, reflex, and agility; practice with mind-intent and with purpose (*You Yi Er Lian*, 有意而练). Practice repeatedly and correctly to ingrain the maneuvers/techniques to be able to deliver the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) explosively. Continual practice is required to maintain your skills and combat readiness. If you are not willing to practice a maneuver or a technique regularly (daily, constantly), you will not be able to call on it spontaneously or reflexively when you need to use it for real with no conscious effort or mind-intent (*Wu Yi Er Yong*, 无意而用).

诀曰：习拳最贵明理和精神有力。

Oral Tradition: To master Yiquan, you must thoroughly understand the principles involved and put them into practice; comprehend the theories and principles; cultivate and strengthen your intentional component of the mind through mental directed conditioning.

We have covered all the basic skills (*Ji Ben Gong*, 基本功) categories of Yiquan. In each category, the quintessential exercises are described in detail while other representative exercises are recorded as reference. Since training and conditioning exercises can be created and refined with imagination and creativity, it is impossible to record all the exercises. Research,

experiment, explore, learn from experience, and extrapolate; from knowing one thing, you will know ten thousand things.

诀曰:发挥本能,有意而练,无意而用。

**Oral Tradition:** Develop your innate abilities; adhere faithfully to effective training and conditioning principles; let mind and body work in synch until skills become spontaneous reflexes. In use, perform the correct maneuvers at the proper timing with no conscious intent or effort.

We have explained various aspects of Yiquan as “separate categories”, but Yiquan is a synthesized harmony of all the aspects, a synergy of all aspects as “one”; you must train to integrate all the requirements as “one whole-body harmony unity” (*Li Ying Song Zheng*, 力应松整). Focus your concentration (mind-intent, *Shen Yi*, 神意) to sense, observe, perceive, explore, and experience with your whole-body neuromuscular system (internal and external) to achieve harmony of movement and force (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调). Make sure they are in harmony with practices for improving health, and conform to the conditioning requirements of self-defense.

诀曰:应用神意观察全身内外一举一动是否符合卫生自卫之条件。

**Oral Tradition:** Look inwards, listen to your body, read your muscles, focus your mind-intent and concentration to sense, observe, perceive, and explore your body elements (internal and external); be sure they are in harmony.

To review, the Yiquan training and conditioning system consists of the following concurrent overlapping sequential steps:

**Step 1:** Build a firm foundation with relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) exercises with visualization and mentally directed *motionless-movement* (*Jing Zhong Qiu Song*, 静中求松). This step synthesizes your mind-body into a coordinated spring-like harmonize whole-body unit (*Song Zhong Qiu Zheng*, 松中求整). Seek, aware, perceive, understand, explore, learn from experience, and master the all-direction balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力).

**Step 2:** Re-pattern your neuromuscular coordination with trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力, including footwork) exercises to always use whole-body movement (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动, *Yi Dong Quan Shen Zhuan*, 一动全身转). Eliminate localized and unnecessary movement with large slow motion *Shi Li* exercises; slow is smooth; smooth is fast (*Huan Yun Zhong Jie*, 缓运中解). With mental visualization/imaging you let your body explore, experience, feel, and learn to use your balanced-force with relaxed whole-body movement (*Song Zheng*, 松整). When you are doing this with practical techniques, you may visualize you are moving in a room



full of molasses, interacting with the surroundings (*Jia Jie Wu Qiong Yu Zhou Li*, 假借无穷宇宙力) or you are engaging an imaginary opponent (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌).

**Step 3:** Practice power release/discharge (*Fa Li*, 发力, including breath control with reverse breathing) exercises. Learn to release power explosively on contact (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发) at will (*Sui Shi Fa Li*, 随时发力) from various parts of your body. Use your whole-body to drive/propel any part of your body as the impact point (*Bao Fa Nei Jing Wei Wai Li*, 爆发内劲为外力). Harmony of actions is prerequisite to harmony of force.

**Step 4:** Practice push-hands (*Tui Shou*, 推手) and sparring (*San Shou*, 散手) exercises with appropriate partners. Learn to correctly execute practical maneuvers/techniques with a partner until they become *un*-conscious automatic spontaneous reflexes, reacting instinctively, making the proper moves at the proper time spontaneously with no deliberate conscious thinking (*Wu Yi Er Yong*, 无意而用). It is important to control your balance and do everything correctly; striking your target or unbalancing your partner is only secondary in training and conditioning. Don't be afraid to examine new ideas by sparring it out. If you have questions about a maneuver, the answers can usually be found by sparring. Do not practice only with people of your own school; learn to deal with fighters from different styles. Practice sparring every day. Use appropriate protective equipment.

诀曰: 静为什麼? 动为什麼? 结果是什麼? 中间过程的现象是什麼? 如此体认操存, 庶乎近矣。

You must question every aspect of your training and conditioning: Why do you keep still? Why do you move? What is the goal? What is the result? What happens in between? Why and when to relax? Why and when to tense? Why move slowly? Why move quickly? Why do large movement? Why do small movement? Learn what to practice; then practice what you have learned to master the fundamental skills. Theories and principles are useless unless you put them into practice.

By using mind-intent (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力) to guide your intentional movement (*You Yi Yun Dong*, 有意运动) in training, you observe, perceive, understand, explore, learn from kinesthetic experience (*Ti Ren*, 体认), and preserve *connected-ness* and *alignment* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯), re-patterning your neuromuscular coordination into a whole-body harmony. Proper mindset is prerequisite to mastery of the basic skills. When maneuvers/techniques become instinctive, natural, and are done with comfortable natural ease with no conscious effort (*Shu Shi Zi Ran*, 舒适自然), you are on the right track.

诀曰: 心领神会, 体认操存。

Oral Tradition: Mentally comprehend in depth; physically ingrain as second nature. Perceive, observe, explore, learn from experience and experiment to re-pattern your mind-body into a harmonized whole-body unity.

诀曰:体察全身内外得力不得力。

Oral Tradition: Observe, perceive, feel, sense, explore, and learn from experience; change and refine your whole-body internally and externally to make sure that every element is at comfortable natural ease, the mind and body working in synch and all movement flows with no conscious effort.

诀曰:锻炼中虽然讲究形式,但不必拘泥,虽言意念,但不必执着。

Oral Tradition: Do not be restricted by physical forms or bounded by mind-intent.

In Yiquan training and conditioning, though we emphasized procedures, methods, and postures (*Xing Shi*, 形式), do not be limited or bounded by them; though we stressed the importance of the intentional component (*Yi Nian*, 意念), do not be conscious of its control. If you have mastered the whole-body harmony, you are not limited by physical form and may adapt, change, refine, and re-invent with total freedom to become *form-less*. Skills must become spontaneous reflexes.

诀曰:若真正掌握了内在的运动规律,则可随意变更,不受姿势限制。

Oral Tradition: When you have mastered the internal neuromuscular coordination of a maneuver/technique to deliver the balanced-force, you can adapt and refine its external form as desired, without restriction, become form-less.

Do not be bounded by the principles and theories presented herein. They are presented for you to study, to comprehend the essence, and to provoke you to do independent research. Use the information as you see fit. You may learn from the examples of others, but you must assimilate and filter what you have learned. You will not progress beyond the fundamentals unless you can refine, change, re-invent, and add to what is given to you. And do not be forever learning from others; creativity and *agility* are your best teachers.

诀曰:莫被法理拘,更勿终学人。

Oral Tradition: Do not be rigidly bounded by the theories and principles, and do not be forever learning from others.

诀曰:人解不如自解,心解不如行解。

Oral Tradition: It is better to solve your own problems than to have them explained by others; practical physical solutions are better than intellectual mental solutions. If you have any questions concerning a maneuver/technique, the answers can usually be found through sparring it out.

As for self-defense maneuvers/techniques, you should totally avoid procedural sequential methods and patterns (forms), and train towards attaining *method-less-ness* (*Quan Wu Quan*, 拳无拳) and *form-less-ness* (*Xing Wu Xing*, 形无形). “If this, then that” type of “pre-arranged sequences” will diminish your innate reflexive abilities and render your infinitely variable spontaneous defense/confrontation response ineffective. Observe, sense, and adapt; change according to your opponent. In an altercation, let your powerful *un*-conscious mind draw on prior decision-making reference points reflexively to perform the proper action at the proper time spontaneously with no conscious mind-intent or effort.

诀曰: 万不可走入招式断续的方法。

Oral Tradition: Do not cultivate sequential patterns of response as methods of solution to the dynamic (non-static) problems of fighting.

In the next section, we list typical training and conditioning guidelines to help you create your own training schedules. In general, you should practice fine motor skills only when you are fresh. Do not practice fine movement after you are tired because you will substitute gross motions for fine motions, ingraining wrong movements and errors. When you become fatigued, shift to practicing gross movements to develop endurance/strength. Always, begin each session with proper warm-up and stretching, and end with appropriate cool-down. In push-hands and sparring, do not let your training discipline dull your reflexes, response spontaneously with no conscious effort.

## A Training Schedule

At the beginners’ level, your mental attitude should be: you need persistent, repetitive practice to ingrain or re-pattern your neuromuscular coordination. Repetition is the mother of all skills. The emphasis should be on relaxed-standing, slow motion trial-and-feel, footwork, and power discharge/release exercises. The goal is to understand and apply the Yiquan principles, to correctly use visualization in relaxation, to use kinesthetic perception, isometric-opposing-force-pairs training, and awareness of and experience of the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) to achieve whole-body neuromuscular harmony. Each training session should consist of:

- a. Warm-up and Stretching (mildly stretch your spine)
- b. Relaxed-Standing

- c. Trial-and-Feel (Fixed-Step/free-Step, Large/small, Fast/slow)
- d. Footwork
- e. Power Discharge/Release
- f. Push-Hands
- g. Sparring
- h. Cool-down

Beginners should spend up to 2/3 of their effort and total practice time (up to 90 minutes daily in several sessions) on relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩), and 1/3 on slow motion trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercises. Use several postures to train different aspects and add to variety but not too many that you do not study any in depth. Do not practice power discharge/release or use any strength until you have mastered the proper whole-body mechanics. Key words for beginners are: relaxed, comfortable, natural, easy and without effort (*Jing Song Zhong Qiu*, 静松中求).

## Practice with Mind-Intent and Purpose

诀曰:有法而练,无意而用。

We have provided the core information for practicing Yiquan. You must begin practicing with correct whole-body mechanics (*Zheng Ti Shu Zhan Lian Tong*, 整体舒展连通), appropriate visualization, slowly and without strength or effort (*Yong Yi Bu Yong Li*, 用意不用力).

诀曰:习拳必需得到名师的口传心授,还要悟透真髓,才有所成。

**Oral Tradition:** Good competent hands-on instructions and thorough comprehension of the theories and principles are absolutely essential for success in Yiquan training.

Remember, once an error is ingrained, it is very difficult to correct/fix and it will show up at the most critical moment. It is therefore very important to seek good instructions. While advancement in Yiquan depends primarily on your own diligent training and conditioning, it is best to have a competent instructor to guide your progress; nothing can replace competent firsthand hands-on instructions. Also, a knowledgeable practicing partner is definitely a “must have” asset.

Guide your practice with mind-intent (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力), set achievable goals as milestones in your training. Make it your habit to adhere faithfully to proven principles. Remember, it takes several hundred thousand repetitions of an action (maneuver/technique) before it becomes an automatic *un*-conscious response. Therefore, don't waste your time and effort on practicing useless flowery stuff (complicated). The shortest distance is *simplicity*; keep all maneuvers simple. Realistic training is the key to any expertise; skills must become spontaneous reflexes to be useful. There are no advanced/secret maneuvers/techniques, only basic fundamental skills being performed extremely well. Do not consciously seek speed. As your skills increase through regular diligent practice (repetitions), the maneuvers will become spontaneous reflexes and will be executed at sub-conscious level; then speed will increase naturally.

诀曰:习之若恒久,不期自然至,变化形无形,周旋意无意。

Oral Tradition: Repetition is the mother of all skills. Perform the proper action at the proper time with no conscious effort and awareness; change maneuvers spontaneously (automatically) without being aware of your action, be versatile, flexible, and form-less; switch tactics as required by the situation sub-consciously with no conscious mind-intent.

诀曰:有形有意都是假,技到无心始见奇。

Oral Tradition: Retaining form and mind-intent in fighting is false, fighting only becomes art when form-less-ness and empty-minded-ness is achieved.

诀曰:他如方法巧妙以制敌,那更要任何方法不许有,要是有了人造的方法参杂其间,可就把万变无穷的本能妙用丢净了。

Oral Tradition: Ideal self-defense maneuvers/techniques imply having no methods and no techniques. Any preconceived method will interfere with your innate spontaneous instinctive abilities, totally discarding the infinite variety of possible ways for you to respond naturally to different circumstances.

诀曰:拳无拳,意无意,无拳无意是真义。

Oral Tradition: Method becomes “no-method”, intent becomes “no-intent”, “no-method” and “no-intent” is the true principle.

When method becomes “*no-method*” (*Quan Wu Quan*, 拳无拳), intent becomes “*no-intent*” (*Yi Wu Yi*, 意无意), all the principles, theories, and exercises described in this manual will seem to be trivial.

孙 子 曰: 兵 无 常 势, 水 无 常 形, 能 因 敌 之 变 而 取 胜 者, 谓 之 神。

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# 附錄





## Appendix A: Glossary (*Shu Yu*, 术语)

### A

#### *Alignment*

“*Alignment*” is defined as the proper arrangement of your musculoskeletal structure (body elements/components). All your joints and skeletal structure are *aligned* to most efficiently support your body weight with your skeletal structure, allowing your muscular system to be relaxed, ready to freely propel your strikes at will. *Alignment* and *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) are prerequisites of a clean “*path-of-force-propagation*” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路) to transmit the reaction forces from pushing off the ground (to take up power from the ground) to your “*contact point*” (*Li Dian*, 力点) with your opponent. *Alignment* and *connected-ness* are achieved through proper use of “*isometric-opposing-force-pairs*” (*Zheng Li*, 争力).

### B

#### *Bao Fa Li*, 爆发力

The “*explosive-force*” (*Bao Fa Li*, 爆发力) is defined as the maximum whole-body “*balanced-force*” (*Zheng Ti Hun Yuan Li*, 整体浑元力) that you can deliver with a maneuver onto your opponent in the shortest time interval, i.e., “*explode*” (*Bao Fa*, 爆发) your internal strength (*Nei Li*, 内力) as bursts external force (*Wai Li*, 外力) onto your opponent (*Ba Li Da Dao Shen Wai*, 把力打到身外).

#### *Bian Hua*, 变化

Change, variation

#### *Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动

“*Motionless-movement*” (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动) is defined as the almost invisible, careful small intentional motions that occur during neuromuscular coordination practice in “*relaxed-standing*” (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩). In *motionless-movement* training, mentally directed imaging (visualization) is used to induce neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchanges and kinesthetic perception. You re-pattern and synthesize your mind-body and seek the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) by visualizing internal/external “*isometric-opposing-force-pairs*” (*Nei Wai Zheng Li*, 内外争力) between different body elements and your surroundings.

**Bu Fa**, 步 法  
Footwork, stepping

## C

### **Centerline**

The invisible/imaginary line from your center gate (**Zhong Men**, 中门) to your opponent's center gate

### **Central line**

The invisible/imaginary line from your nose to your navel

**Chen Shi**, 沉 实

Strong, sink, heavy, solid

### **Connected-ness**

“*Connected-ness*” (**Lian Tong**, 连通) is defined as the concept and the result of arranging your body elements properly (mental and physical) to keep the “*path-of-force-propagation*” (**Jing Lu**, 劲路) clean and pure, “*connecting*” all your body components (upper and lower body) as “one” (**Ti Zheng Ru Zhu**, 体整如铸). It is cultivated/nurtured with appropriate mentally induced internal “*isometric-opposing-force-pairs*” (**Shen Nei Zheng Li**, 身内争力). It is the key factor to transmit the reaction forces from pushing off the ground (“*conducting*” the ground) to the “*contact/impact points*” with your opponent. (See **Lian Tong Yi Guan**, 连通一贯.)

## D

**Dan Cao**, 单 操  
Solo exercises

**Dan Tian**, 丹 田

Lower abdomen; area between navel and groin

**Dao Wei**, 到 位

Optimal position, using your full reach to achieve superior position

**De Li**, 得 力

“*In the zone*” (**De Li**, 得 力) is defined as a state of control, mental and physical, achieved through **Shi Li** (试力) training, in which you can perform an action *effortlessly* with perfection, and with total mind-body harmony. In this state, things seem to automatically fall into their

proper places without you even realizing that you were thinking about them; your mind and body work in synch, movement flows with no conscious effort.

**Dian**, 点

Contact point (See *Li Dian*, 力点)

**Ding Bu**, 定步

Fixed-step

**Ding Ba Bu**, 丁八步

Fighting on-guard or small step

**Dong Dang**, 动荡

Core/torso swings, sways, or oscillations (see *body mechanics*) are used to generate usable strike force by weight shift (i.e., using momentum/inertia).

**Drill**

“Drill” (*Zuan*, 钻): The coaxial twisting of limb or torso.

**Duan Shou**, 断手

Sparring/fighting exercise initiating from a detached, no-hand-contact distance or disengaging from initially having hand-contact

## F

**Fa Li**, 发力

“Power discharge/release” (*Fa Li*, 发力): *explode* your balanced-force onto an opponent. The primary characteristic is a “spring-like elastic force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) discharge that shoots your punches or strikes out with a whip-like snap. Yiquan’s method of using strength or releasing power comes from “taking up power from the ground” (*Li Cong Di Qi*, 力从地起) with your whole-body going instantaneously from a state of extreme relaxation (*Song*, 松) to one of extreme tension (*Jin*, 紧) with focused concentration. (See *Bao Fa Li*, 爆发力).

**Fan Ying**, 反应

Spontaneous reflex

## G

**Gan Rao**, 干扰

Obstruct, interfere, disturb

### **Ground Path**

The term “*ground path*” is used by Mike Sigman to indicate an imaginary path, leading from your feet on the ground to your points of contact with an opponent, to transmit the reaction forces from pushing off the ground onto him. (See *connected-ness*, *Lian Tong*, 连通.)

### **Gu Ge Zhi Cheng**, 骨骼支撑

Skeletal support: use bone structure to support weight and transmit force

### **Gu Dang**, 鼓荡

Undulate wave like oscillation as in vibration of springs, agitate, arouse

### **Gun Fa**, 棍法

Staff maneuvers/techniques: a category of exercise designed to enhance the *body mechanics* of Yiquan practitioners through the use of a white-wax-wood staff as apparatus. The maneuvers/techniques are actually reality-based long weapon moves.

## **H**

### **He Yi Yun Dong**, 合意运动

Harmonized intention movement or action

### **Hing Song Jun Zheng**, 轻松均整

Relaxed, harmonized

### **Hun Yuan Li**, 浑元力

In Yiquan, the ideal force for hand-to-hand fighting is called the “*balanced-force*” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). It is generated by harmonized whole-body motion (synthesized concurrent, sequential, and overlapping motions of body elements), which is the result of synchronized muscular contractions. In use, it is *effort-less*, *explosive*, instinctive, natural, and is delivered over very short distances at extremely high speed onto your opponents. This clean, crisp execution requires total harmony of your whole-body motion i.e., using your neuromuscular coordination in perfect whole-body harmony (**Zheng**, 整). Harmony of motion, merging all musculature as one (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一), is the single most important prerequisite of harmony of force (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). While directed towards a primary target, it is manifested in all (multiple) directions simultaneously through the use of internal and external isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Hun Yuan Yi Zheng*, 浑元一争) in order to preserve your equilibrium at the moment of striking. It has a primary direction but it does not have an absolute direction. This attribute of “*balance*” means it can be changed and adapted easily according to your opponent. We thus refer to such a force as a “*balanced-force*.”

*Hu Xi*, 呼 吸  
Breathing

*Huo Bu*, 活 步  
Free-step

## I

***Intentional Movement*** (*You Yi Yun Dong*, 有意运动)

The small or large careful movement resulted from mental directed activity. (See also *Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动).

***Internal Isometrics*** (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力)

Internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Mao Dun Zheng Li*, 矛盾争力) induced by visualizing imaginary springs connecting different body elements.

## J

***Ji Ben Gong***, 基 本 功  
Basic skills

***Ji Rou Ru Yi***, 肌 肉 如 一

All muscular elements merged as “one” (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一). This is one of the “*four touchstone states of perception*” (*Si Ru Jing Jie*, 四如境界). As a result of successfully achieving whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调), your whole-body musculature “merge” to act as one coordinated unit.

***Jian Jia***, 肩 架  
Frame, posture integrity

***Jian Wu***, 健 舞

Free style solo exercise: a category of advanced shadow boxing exercise, for displaying your abilities with natural ease and with proper body mechanics. Literal translation is “*Health Dance*” (*Jian Wu*, 健舞).

***Jia Xiang Di***, 假 想 敌

“*Imaginary opponent*” (*Jia Xiang Di*, 假想敌): a category of exercise (either stationary or in motion) designed to train for combat readiness. The trainee must use proper Yiquan body mechanics to execute various maneuvers/techniques while visualizing a fight with imaginary opponents.

### *Jin*, 紧

Tense (*Jin*, 紧) is a mental and physical state, inherently opposite to relax (*Song*, 松). “*Focus*” is the sudden tensing (*Tu Ran Yi Jin*, 突然一紧) or tightening of your whole-body musculature without being rigid and stiff (*Jiang*, 僵); it is used momentarily during *Fa Li* (发力) to focus your whole-body balanced-force (*Zheng Li*, 整力).

### *Jing Lu*, 劲 路

The imaginary “*path-of-force-propagation*” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路) through various body elements, components, and parts is defined as the *Jing Lu*. It is the action of the coordinated concurrent sequential overlapping movements of your body elements to take up power from the ground (*Li Cong De Qi*, 力从地起), to transmit your whole-body balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) through your body onto your opponent through an impact/contact point (*Li Dian*, 力点).

### *Jing Shen Jia Jie*, 精 神 假 借

Imagery or visualization (*Jing Shen Jia Jie*, 精神假借) is a form of passive mental visualization used in Yiquan to ease (induce) the mind-body into a tranquil, relaxed state.

### *Jing Zhong Zhi Dong*, 静 中 之 动

“*Motion-in-stillness*” (*Jing Zhong Zhi Dong*, 静中之动) is an expression used to describe the subtle intrinsic motion that occurs during relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) practice.

### *Ju Bu*, 局 部

Local

## K

### *Kong Cao*, 空 操

Performing maneuvers/techniques with no external resistance

## L

### *Li Dian*, 力 点

Point of force/contact/impact

### *Lian Tong*, 连 通

“*Connected-ness*” (*Lian Tong*, 连通) is the foundation for developing *Hun Yuan Li* (浑元力) and *Tan Li* (弹力). It is the mental and physical condition of proper musculoskeletal *alignment* and appropriately balanced relaxation and tension to best transmit the reaction forces (of pushing off the ground) through your entire body to the contact points and onto your opponent. Keep *the*

*ground path pure*, take up power from the ground. It is cultivated/nurtured by proper use of internal isometric-opposing-force-pairs (*Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力).

*Ling Huo*, 灵活

Nimble, agile, quick, flexible

*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋

Spiral, pivot, twist, “drill” (*Zuan*, 钻)

## M

*Mao Fa Ru Ji*, 毛发如戟

This is one of the “four touchstone states of perception” (*Si Ru Jing Jie*, 四如境界). By honing your nerves and senses to a high level of sensitivity, you would feel as if your hairs are standing on ends (*Mao Fa Ru Ji*, 毛发如戟), interacting with the surrounding.

*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步

Frictional step, wading step

*Mo Jin*, 摸劲 or *Mo Li*, 摸力

During “trial-and-feel” (*Shi Li*, 试力) practice of a maneuver/technique, focusing your attention and awareness to “feel” and perceive the coordinated concurrent sequential overlapping linkage/passage of forces through your body’s elements is called *Mo Jin* (摸劲) or *Mo Li* (摸力). Explore and learn from experience. Use the kinesthetic perception (*Ti Ren*, 体认) of the internal and external isometrics (*Zheng Li*, 争力) in *Shi Li* exercises to ingrain the “path-of-force-propagation” (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路) of the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力).

*Mao Dun*, 矛盾

Opposites: You are aware of things by recognizing the existence of their opposites. Inherent opposites of things are co-existing pairs such as forward/backward, upward/downward, outward/inward, relax/tense, agonist-muscle/antagonist-muscle, solid/void etc. Yiquan cultivate the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) by reducing internal interference and by using opposites, internal and external isometrics (*Zheng Li*, 争力), etc., to develop elastic spring-like muscular contraction/extension abilities (*Tan Li*, 弹力).

## Mindset

It is a state of mind that incorporates psychological and physiological patterns for one to function under different conditions (e.g., extreme stress).

## N

### ***Nei Luo Xuan***, 内 螺 旋

Start with your thumbs pointing up, palms facing each other, and your toes pointing forward.

Rotating your thumbs or toes towards your central line (***Zhong Xian***, 中线) are defined as “*twisting/drilling inward*” (***Nei Luo Xuan***, 内螺旋) i.e., rotating your right thumb or right toes counter-clockwise, your left thumb or left toes clockwise are all defined as *twisting/drilling inward*.

### ***Neuro-Linguistic Programming*** (NLP)

The process of learning a physical skill through *modeling* and *imaging*: In modeling you mimic (or mirror) the physical movements of the teacher and in imaging you think through (or visualization) the movements to ingrain the physical skill.

## O

### ***OODA Cycle***

Combatants first *observe* their opponents, *orient* themselves so they can understand the situation, then they make a *decision* to direct their activities, and then they take *action*. This is often referred to as John Boyd’s OODA cycle. It is impossible for the average person to consciously perform this sequential pattern of response in the compressed time frame of hand-to-hand fighting/combat. Your conscious brain cannot keep up with the speed of the information processing necessary for close quarter fighting/combat. You must relegate this nonlinear cycling to your powerful *un*-conscious mind.

## P

### ***Pai Wei***, 拍 位

Rhythm and positioning of a maneuver/technique

### ***Path-of-Force-Propagation; Path of Force Transmission***

See ***Jing Lu*** (劲路)

### ***Ping Heng***, 平 衡

Balance, equilibrium



## Q

### *Quan Jin*, 拳 劲

Punching force, whole-body balanced-force delivered with punches

### *Quan Da Cun Jing*, 拳 打 寸 劲

Deliver force with punches or blows traveling over very short distance (inches)

### *Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全 身 力 一

Merge all components of your body's forces as “one”.

## S

### *San Shou*, 散 手

Sparring: A category of exercise used for practicing the practical (self-defense) aspects of Yiquan

### *Shen Fa*, 身 法

*Body Mechanics (body method, core/torso maneuvers)*: Proper body mechanics means eliminating localized movement and re-pattern your mind-body to always use whole-body movement with appropriate *connected-ness* and *alignment*. When one part moves, your well-coordinated whole-body automatically moves in unison (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调). Generally, proper body mechanics imply movements of your limbs are the results of movements of your head and whole-body.

### *Shen Ru Qian Guan*, 身 如 铅 灌

This is one of the “*four touchstone states of perception*” (*Si Ru Jing Jie*, 四如境界). With proper mind-body relaxation, you would sense/perceive a thickness to the surrounding air and/or an added heaviness in your torso and limbs (*Shen Ru Qian Guan*, 身如铅灌).

### *Shi*, 实

*Shi* (实) is used to mean solid, substantial, weighted, or full. It is the opposite of *Xu* (虚).

### *Shi Li*, 试 力

“*Trial-and-feel*” (*Shi Li*, 试力) is a category of exercise used for cultivating harmony of actions, developing your balanced-force, and enhancing your whole-body neuromuscular coordination (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调) through kinesthetic perception (*Ti Ren*, 体认). Visualization (*Yi Nian You Dao*, 意念诱导), isometric-opposing-force pairs (*Zheng Li*, 争力) and relaxation/tension exchange (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) are vital elements.

**Shi Sheng, 试 声**

Grunting (**Shi Sheng**, 试声) is a category of exercise designed to functionally integrate the whole-body during **Fa Li** (发力). Breath control with grunting is used to marshal your whole-body into action, compensating for the deficiencies during **Fa Li**. Yiquan uses certain specific sounds to synthesize the body and engaging the breathing and core musculature into action; specifically marshaling your breathing musculature into the discharge/release of power and whole-body coordinated movement.

**Shou Jiao Qi Dao, 手 脚 齐 到**

Simultaneity: body, head, hands and feet (and mind) *arrive* simultaneously (**Shou Jiao Qi Dao**, 手脚齐到).

**Shu Shi De Li, 舒 适 得 力**

Comfortable natural ease

**Shu Zhan, 舒 展**

Loosen, relax, stretch; mildly extending musculature and joints to provide a comfortable natural state with maximum elasticity

**Shun Li Ni Xing, 顺 力 逆 行**

A low degree of tension in the prime mover muscles uses less energy; too early contraction of antagonist muscles wastes energy through internal interference. When executing a maneuver by contracting/extending your mover/action muscles, always maintain the attitude/ability to reverse the movement using the antagonistic muscles; simultaneously visualizing both forward and backward forces. **Shun Li Ni Xing** (顺力逆行) refers to this ability to control the impulses to the antagonist muscles, allowing them to relax and perform with minimal antagonistic tension yet retaining the ability to reverse the action or change directions.

**Si Qu Fei Zhi, 似 曲 非 直**

Slightly bent and not straight (joints are not locked)

***Simplicity of choice***

The principle of “*simplicity of choice*” implies that instinctive, natural, subconscious, spontaneous movements are the simplest, quickest, and most accurate while conscious choice reactions/movements take longer to perform.

**Song, 松**

Relaxed (**Song**, 松): It is a tranquil mental and physical state, opposite to tense (**Jin**, 紧), that allows for gentle easy and supple movement. It is a state with alertness and readiness for action without being physically lax, slacken, or diminished in consciousness. Relaxation of muscles is only a training method and not the goal; appropriately balancing relaxation and tension to provide *connected-ness* and whole-body harmony is the desired goal.

*Song Jin Mao Dun*, 松 紧 矛 盾  
Opposite co-existing states of relaxation and tension

## T

*Tan Li*, 弹 力

The “*spring-like force*” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) is defined as the clean crisp delivery of your whole-body balanced-force like the sudden releasing of a trapped coil-spring. This “spring-like” or “whip-like” power-discharge is cultivated and nurtured by practicing rapid relaxation/tension exchanges (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换), switching your awareness and focus attention from using force in one dominant direction to another by using small rapid whole-body/core oscillations (*You Zheng Ti Dong Dang Zhong Qiu Tan Li*, 由整体动荡中求弹力) to take up power from the ground.

*Tan Huang*, 弹 簧  
Spring, spring-like, elastic

*Tan Xing*, 弹 性  
Spring-like (elastic) condition

*Tan Xing Li*, 弹 性 力  
*Spring-like elastic force*

*Ti Zheng Ru Zhu*, 体 整 如 铸

This is one of the “*four touchstone states of perception*” (*Si Ru Jing Jie*, 四如境界). When whole-body unity is achieved, you would feel as if your entire body is “forged” in one piece; moving any one component would imply moving your entire body in unison.

*Ti Ren*, 体 认  
Seek, perceive, explore, and learn from experience through kinesthetic perception. Pay full attention to learn a maneuver and its associated internal/external dynamics with your mind-body.

*Tui Shou*, 推 手

Push-Hands (*Tui Shou*, 推 手): A category of exercise designed to allow contact engagement and execution of maneuvers/techniques without the use of protective equipment. It is a form of “trial-and-feel” exercise between two opponents.

## V

### **Visualization**

Visualization is seeing with your mind's eye or mental imagery. Here, you use conscious suggestions (imagery) to affect your *un*-conscious action or processes. As you visualize performing various physical movements, your body responds as if you were having the experience for real.

## W

### **Wai Luo Xuan**, 外螺旋

Start with your thumbs pointing up, palms facing each other, and your toes pointing forward. Rotating your thumbs or toes away from your central line are defined as “*twisting/drilling outward*” (**Wai Luo Xuan**, 外螺旋) i.e., rotating your right thumb or right toes clockwise, your left thumb or left toes counter-clockwise are all defined as *twisting/drilling outward*.

## X

### **Xie Tiao**, 谐调

Harmony

### **Xing Qu Li Zhi**, 形曲力直

Use curve physical form to deliver linear force; keep all your joints flexible, aligned, and at angles larger than 90 degrees.

### **Xu**, 虚

The term is used to mean void, empty, insubstantial, un-weighted, or loose. It is the opposite of **Shi** (实)

### **Xu Ling**, 虚灵

Light, agile, nimble: Use soft light agile movement, as if walking on thin ice, testing as you move with careful forward and backward attitude. This allows you to switch quickly between maneuvers, developing fast transient *agility* and quick rate of change.

### **Xu Ling Ting Ba**, 虚灵挺拔

Maintain maximum *agility* to adapt and change with appropriate whole-body relaxation. Tuck in your chin; mildly elongate your spine by visualizing a string attached to the top of your head pulling it upwards while sitting down on a high stool and/or visualize *drilling* your feet downwards (**Jiao Xia Cai**, 脚下踩) while pushing your head upwards (**Tou Shang Ding**, 头上顶) to maintain upward/downward isometric-opposing-forces (**Shang Xia Zheng Li**, 上下争力).

## Y

### Yi, 意

“*Mind-Intent*” (Yi, 意): The Chinese word Yi (意) means thoughts, ideas, mind or intent, etc. It is best expressed as *mind-intent* or mind-intention for the purpose of discussing Yiquan.

### Yi Chu Ji Fa, 一 触 即 发

“*Explode*” or “*burst*” your internal strength (*Nei Li*, 内力) as external force (*Wai Li*, 外力) on contact with your opponent

### Yi Fa Ji Zhi, 一 发 即 止

After discharge/release of power, immediately relax and return to on-guard for follow-up

### Yi Zhi Xing, 一 致 性

Harmonized, coordinated

### Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong, 一 动 无 不 动

Every body element must move only as part of your whole-body motion, never independently; your whole-body always moves in unison.

### Yi Dong Quan Shen Zhuan, 一 动 全 身 转

Every move is the result of the twisting, *drilling*, and pivoting of all body elements in harmony.

### Yi Nian You Dao, 意 念 诱 导

Mental directed activities or mental directed imagery: A form of active mental visualization used in Yiquan to direct and induce certain intentional whole-body coordinated movements for kinesthetic perceptive training.

### Yi Yi Ling Li, 以 意 领 力

Use Yi (意) to lead, guide and direct your force; do not use brute strength. The goals of this elementary level training are: To seek mind-body relaxation from stillness (*Jing Zhong Qiu Song*, 静中求松) and whole-body coordination through relaxation/tension exchange (*Li Qiu Song Zheng*, 力求松整).

### Yi Dao Li Dao, 意 到 力 到

Strive for simultaneity, let Yi and force *arrive* simultaneously. Synthesize your mind-body so the power goes to wherever your mind-intent goes (*Yi Dao Li Dao*, 意到力到). Your whole-body becomes “elastic and spring-like” (*Bian Ti Si Tan Huang*, 遍体似弹簧). The goals of this intermediate level training are: To merge all force components as “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一) and to develop the ability to explode your internal power as external force (*Ba Li Da Dao Shen Wai*, 把力打到身外).

### **Yi Li Bu Fen**, 意 力 不 分

Synthesize *Yi* (意) and balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) to become one. Merge your mind-intent and balanced-force so they become inseparable and indistinguishable (*Yi Li Bu Fen*, 意力不分). At this advanced level, actions of maneuvers/techniques become spontaneous reflexes (*Bu Qi Zi Ran Zhi*, 不期自然至); power-discharges (*Fa Li*, 发力) are delivered with very small movement (in inches, *Quan Da Cun Jing*, 拳打寸劲).

### **Yiquan** (*Yi Quan*, 意 拳)

Yiquan is a reality-based Chinese martial art created by Master *Wang XiangZhai* (王乡斋老师) and has been further developed and promoted by his designated successor Master *Yao ZongXun* (姚宗勋老师). The third generation representative, Master *Yao ChengRong* (姚承荣老师), son of Master *Yao ZongXun*, inheriting the mantle of direct lineage succession, is continuing the advancement, development, and promotion of Yiquan at *Beijing Zhong Yi Wu Guan* (北京中意武馆).

## **Z**

### **Zhan Zhuang**, 站 桩

Relaxed-Standing: A category of exercises designed to synthesize your mind-body into a spring-like whole-body harmony unity. It includes “*motion-in-stillness*” and “*motionless-movement*” exercises and is relatively motionless in external appearance. Visualization or mental imaging, internal isometrics, and intentional-movement are vital components.

### **Zheng Li**, 争 力

*Isometric-Opposing-Force-Pairs*: This Yiquan terminology is used to describe mentally induced isometric-opposing-force-pairs between different body elements (internal isometrics, *Shen Nei Zheng Li*, 身内争力) or opposing force relationship between body elements and external objects (*Shen Wai Zheng Li*, 身外争力). You sense and kinesthetically perceive these by visualizing imaginary springs connecting these body elements and external objects. To certain extend, they produce relaxation/tension exchanges between the elements to cultivate the whole-body spring-like elastic forces (*Tan Li*, 弹力). The most important pairs are: between your head and your feet (vertical pair), between your knees and hips, between your wrists, and between your wrists and your neck. These develop the internal whole-body coordinated movement and cultivate the potential for explosive power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力).

### **Zheng**, 整

Whole, harmonized, coordinated, unitized, synthesized

### **Zheng Li**, 整 力

Whole-body balanced-force

**Zheng Ti**, 整 体

Whole-Body: A term used to mean the opposite of localized element and/or localized movement. Whole-body coordination is synthesizing all your abilities into an effective performance of an action. The well-coordinated spring-like whole-body is a harmonized unity that does everything smoothly with proper *body mechanics* and with *comfortable natural ease* of movement, even during maximum effort.

**Zhong Men**, 中 门

Center gate: A point between your feet at which your central line meets the centerline on the ground; the centerline joins the center gates of two combatants.

**Zhong Ping**, 中 平

Balanced, Equilibrium, Centered: Keep your center of gravity at the “center” of the “base” formed by your feet. Level: Head level, shoulders level, hips level, feet level

**Zhong Xian**, 中 线

Central line: An imaginary line, running vertically from your nose to your navel, used as a reference for description of Yiquan techniques

**Zi Dong Yun Dong**, 自 动 运 动

Spontaneous reflexes or movement

**Zou Bu**, 走 步

Footwork is the stepping foot movement used to maintain perfect balance for effective attack and defense. Yiquan’s basic footwork is the wading step (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步).

**Zuan Fan**, 钻 翻

Overtake, twist and *drill*

## Appendix B: Preliminary Exercises

Caution: Consult with your doctor before practicing any of the exercises described in this guide.

In this section we will briefly list some commonsense precautions, warm-up, and cool-down exercises.

1. Wear non-binding clothing for practice.
2. Do not practice when overly full or hungry. Do not practice an hour prior to or after meal.
3. Practice with *comfortable natural ease*. Breathe naturally. Do not pay any conscious attention to breathing. Never attempt to hold or lengthen your breath.
4. Do warm-up and mild stretching exercises prior to vigorous practice. (Caution: when stretching, do not bounce and never stretch a cold muscle.) Specifically, mildly stretch your spine before practicing relaxed standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩).

Examples:

- a. Arm swing (*Shuai Shou*, 甩手): Stand as in *Cheng Bao Zhuang* (撑抱桩), with arms relaxed on your sides. *Drill* and push off with your left leg (stretch the imaginary spring connecting your left foot to your head) while swinging your left arm forward and upward (as in under arm swing throwing) and your right arm backward and upward. Then *drill* and push off your right leg while swinging your right arm forward and upward and your left arm backward and upward. Stay relaxed. Do 40 to 50 repetitions.
- b. Swing arms in full circle in opposite directions.
- c. Waist/hip rotation (*Xuan Yao*, 旋腰): Stand as in *Cheng Bao Zhuang* (撑抱桩), with arms relaxed on your sides. *Drill* and push off with your left leg (stretch the imaginary spring connecting your left foot to your head) while swinging your torso to your right. Then *drill* and push off your right leg while swinging your torso to your left. Stay relaxed. Do 30 – 40 repetitions.
- d. Mildly stretch your spine (*Ting Ba*, 挺拔): Stand as in *Cheng Bao Zhuang* (撑抱桩), with arms relaxed on your sides. Push your head upward mildly stretch



your spine (*Shen Lan Yao*, 伸懒腰). Hold position for several seconds; do not bounce.

5. Practice daily even if it is only for short periods. The benefit of Yiquan is cumulative. To get the most benefit, you must practice diligently, constantly; exercise intensely enough to your personal training level.
  6. Practice is relaxation. Relaxation is practice. Relax your entire body - internally and externally - during practice. Remember: Relax does not mean being limp, slumping down or physically lax; tense does not mean being rigid or stiff.
  7. Do not overdo any exercise. You should not feel stressed out mentally or physically the next morning. Practice as you feel inclined.
  8. Adopt a passive attitude. If you cannot master all aspects of an exercise today, there is always tomorrow.
  9. Do cool-down and mild stretching to finish each session.
  10. After practice, replenish your body system with plenty of fluids and anti-oxidants. Proper and adequate sleep will commit your new skills to your long-term memory.
-

## Appendix C: Supplemental Exercises

Keep an open mind; you should adopt any modern training and conditioning techniques and apparatus that are beneficial: jogging, skip-rope, speedball, heavy bag, etc. In this section we briefly describe some traditional supplemental training methods.

### Muscle Relaxation

Find a quiet place; stand in a comfortable posture. Begin by tensing your right hand for an instant, then relax it and let it go loose so it feel heavy and warm. Tense and relax your right side, moving up to your forearm and shoulder, then down to the leg and foot. Repeat this with the left side. Wait for the feeling of relaxation and warm. Next relax the muscles of your hips and let the relaxation wave pass from your abdomen to your chest so they feel heavy and warm. Next relax your shoulders, neck, jaw and the muscles of your face; almost smiling and relaxing the muscles that control the eyes. After mastering this technique, you will not need to tense your muscles before relaxing them.

### Mental Relaxation

Adopt a passive attitude. Do everything *with no conscious effort* as if nothing critical is happening (*Ruo Wu Qi Shi*, 若无其事). Instead of trying to achieve mind-body relaxation, pretend you have already mastered this relaxation. Do not help or hinder your effort. Do not attempt to resist or retain any thoughts. Let them come and go. Blocking a stressful thought (or negative thought) drives it deeper into your memory. To avoid stressful thoughts, direct the mind towards happy relaxing thoughts to facilitate relaxation; visualize seeing a calm blue sky. If you still do not feel calm and relaxed, it may be helpful to try a sound such as “Ah” silently during exhale. Always keep “almost smiling” and relax the muscles of your face, eyes and forehead. Muscle Relaxation and Mental Relaxation are interactive and must be done together.

### Endurance Training

Jump rope, jogging, swimming, and other light load aerobic exercise for long period with “burst in time intervals” during which you push your limit develops your endurance. High number of reps with light resistance cultivates strength and speed while low number of reps with maximum resistance builds power and endurance.

## Eyes

Your eyes are your remote (visual) sensors for gathering information. Accurate judgment of timing, distance, and angles plays an important role in your fighting skill and ability. Seeing quickly (speed in visual awareness) may compensate for slowness in reaction time. In sparring, as in fighting, there are two types of eye contact:

1. Sweep your opponent with your eyes, use peripheral vision

This relaxed casual sweep sees the whole picture and everything simultaneously. Allow you to judge the distance, angle, your opponent's mental state, etc. The focus of attention is on general movement and produces faster action than using "focus on a cue".

2. Intense focus at an intended target area, use central vision

This concentrated focus gaze or stare may be directed at your opponent's eyes, central line, feet positions or even his whole-body. You are using your eyes to put mental pressure on your opponent.

You must actively interchange these two types of eye contact methods to your advantage. When practicing relaxed standing, exercise and condition your eyes by switching between the narrow intense focus and the sweep. In combat, you must expand your attention over the entire area by using peripheral vision sweep.

Most of us blink instinctively when we see quick motion towards our face and/or eyes. But in sparring we must keep our eyes open to see what is happening, therefore instinctive blinking must be controlled. The following exercises help you overcome your natural tendency to blink:

1. Keep your eyes open while brushing a light silk handkerchief over them to correct your tendency to blink at incoming objects.
2. Watch and follow flying insects with your eyes.
3. Keep your head stationary. Roll your eyeballs. Look up, look down, look sideways and rotate them.

## Sand Bag

Do not use a hard filled bag. Use soft material to fill the bag to simulate the elastic human body. Strike the bag with your chosen practical maneuvers/techniques. Do your strikes with maximum acceleration and whole-body power release. The bag should vibrate at a high frequency. If the bag just swings, your power release is too slow and you are just pushing the bag. Switch often between different maneuvers/techniques (*agility*) and between soft and hard focus. If you

practice tensed hard focus strikes only, you can easily become too tensed, rigid, and stiff. Exercise on the punching bag ensures blows are delivered with power. Use “burst in time intervals” during which you push your limit to cultivate strength and endurance.

## Shadow Boxing

Shadow boxing (*Ji Ying*, 击影) builds up speed and *agility*. Imagine (visualize) fighting your worst enemy, fight all out but visualize success. Be creative, use your imagination to the utmost; visualize the moves of your imaginary opponent and work up to a real fighting frame of mind. Use simple, natural combinations but be realistic with your abilities, do not let your mental demands exceed your physical capability. Do various combinations of techniques with utmost freedom of expression.

## Small Cotton Ball

Do shadow boxing with a small cotton ball (or multiple cotton balls) to train for accuracy, speed, and agility. Hang a small cotton ball (approximately 2” in diameter) at throat/eye level. (To reduce the magnitude of the random movement, you can hang a tennis ball at groin level below the cotton ball on the same string.) Keep your eyes on this cotton ball target and visualize an imaginary opponent. Use any practical (*San Shou*, 散手) maneuver/technique to strike this “imaginary opponent” with the utmost degree of freedom. Change distances, angles, levels, side steps, go around, etc. Be creative, use as many different tactics and natural combinations as you desire, you are limited only by your imagination. Execute combinations correctly with accuracy and precision on this “imaginary opponent”; make sure the path-of-force-propagation is clean (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路) and your power-discharge is crisp (*Cui*, 脆). Light “freedom of movement” exercises give you the necessary *agility* conditioning.

## Pads

Train with a partner using handheld foam target pads (*Yin Ba*, 引靶). Change target positions often; keep them moving. Do not set definite patterns. Learn to strike with accuracy and to follow through with your strikes. Training with pads improves speed, timing, and accurate judgment of the fighting measure.

## Sustaining Body Strikes Conditioning

No one is evasive enough to avoid being hit in a fight; you can roll with the punches to make them into “glancing blows”; “rolling” is to move your body with a strike to reduce its force. In the on-guard posture, for maximum mobility, you naturally use a semi-crouch with a weight bias

on the balls of your feet. If you must take a hit, coil and twist your torso: snap backward against a straight punch (snap back, *Hou Shan*, 后闪), roll to either side against hooks, move backward and away against uppercuts, and move circular down and to either side for downward chops. Remember: at the “end-of-the-run zone”, the power of a strike is greatly reduced. However, you may need to jam a strike in its preparation or development (*Jie Ji*, 截击); to back away from a kick is to give the kicker room to kick.

You must expect to sustain some strikes and glancing blows in a confrontation, no one can evade all strikes. We do not recommend special training just to absorb punches such as "golden bell" (*Jin Zhong Zhao*, 金钟罩), etc. However, reverse breathing (grunting) training can condition you to stimulate your musculature into immediate action to produce a resilient, spring-like resistance (*Hu Xi Tan Li*, 呼吸弹力) to the incoming force. While relaxed standing and grunting exercises will improve your body's elasticity (*Tan Xing*, 弹性), the following exercises will also help your conditioning:

1. Massage areas of your body that is likely to be hit.
2. Lightly poke these areas with your fingertips.
3. Practice absorbing power release with a partner. Place hands with full contact first and then release power onto each other.

## Staff (*Gun Fa*, 棍 法) and Other Weapons

The white-wax-wood staff (*Bai La Gan*, 白蜡杆; spear, *Qiang*, 枪) is a traditional training apparatus and weapon. It is used to train the explosive power discharge/release. However, Yiquan emphasizes that mastering empty hand fighting (*Quan*, 拳) implies mastery of (cold) weapons because weapons are just an extension of your arms and hands. Thus, practicing with weapon exclusively is not advised.

诀曰: 拳 成 兵 器 就, 莫 专 习 刀 枪。

Oral Tradition: Skill is more important than the weapon. It is easier to learn to use a (cold) weapon after you have mastered the basic skills of empty hand fighting. Do not train exclusively with swords and spears.

## Appendix D: *Hold/Press Posture (Fu An Zhuang, 扶按桩)* Training

NOTES: This is adapted from a three part blog on the *hold/press* posture. It is an example of a training and conditioning sequence to cultivate the balanced-force.

A unique property of Yiquan is that it can be practiced at any time, at any place, and by anyone in any age group. It is simple, easy to learn and understand, and is practical for improving health, for self-defense, and for studying the true essence of martial arts. This article is an outline of my experience of using *relaxed-standing (Zhan Zhuang, 站桩)* to cultivate the *balanced-force (Hun Yuan Li, 浑元力)*. While the training methods and procedures are based on the teachings of Master **Yao ChengRong** (姚承荣老师; Beijing Yiquan Martial Arts Academy, <http://www.yiquan-zywg.com/english/home.php>), all errors and mistakes are mine.

In this manuscript (*YIQUAN BEGINNERS' GUIDE*), we have outlined a method of Yiquan training. We have emphasized the importance of merging and synthesizing all categories of Yiquan training; *relaxed-standing (Zhan Zhuang, 站桩)*, *trial-and-feel (Shi Li, 试力)*, *footwork (Zou Bu, 走步)*, *grunting (Shi Sheng, 试声)*, *power-discharge (Fa Li, 发力)*, *push-hands (Tui Shou, 推手)*, and *sparring (San Shou, 散手)* must be integrated. And, throughout Yiquan training, mind-intent (*Yi, 意*) is the primary directing/guiding factor; your thinking/visualization determines your *feel* and your *feel* determines your action.

To start Yiquan training, you should decide which maneuver/technique is to be made into your “*habit*”, to be trained to become your spontaneous reflex; you must be selective. Then set realistic goals that you know you can achieve; focus on one realistic goal at a time by breaking down big goals into small stages. And you should award yourself for achieving each goal to encourage further development. We will illustrate this procedure with the *hold/press* posture (*Fu An Zhuang, 扶按桩*).

The *hold/press* posture (*Fu An Zhuang, 扶按桩*) is a basic relaxed-standing posture for improving health and push-hands (*Tui Shou, 推手*). From the perspective of seeking/sensing/perceiving the six directional balanced-force (forward/backward, upward/downward, and laterally open/close; *Liu Mian Mo Li, 六面摸力*) the dominant dimension for this posture is the forward/backward dimension.

**A. Parallel Step *hold/press* Posture (*Ping Bu Fu An Zhuang*, 平步扶按桩)**

Stand erect, feet shoulder width apart; with the outside edges of your feet approximately parallel to each other (toes turned slightly inward). Bend the knees slightly (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直); visualize holding a balloon between your knees. Imagine applying inward pressure below your knees and outward pressure above your knees (*Kai He Zheng Li*, 开合争力). Relax the lower back filling out the small of the back as if you are sitting on a high stool. Keep your spine erect and imagine a string pulling the top of your head upwards, tuck-in the chin slightly as if holding a small balloon between the chin and the neck. The head and neck should be held erect; visualize stretching imaginary springs between your head and feet, lengthening your spine (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力). Relax the facial muscles; almost smile. Direct your eyes to an imaginary distant object; imagine looking through a light fog. Lightly touch the teeth together. Part the mouth slightly. Allow the tongue to lie naturally; do not be concerned with it touching any particular place in the mouth. Keep your shoulders down and relaxed, lift arms up, palms facing down, fingers pointing forward, hands higher than your elbows. Keep your hands two to three fists width apart about a foot in front of your hips, below your shoulders, and above your navel. Separate your fingers; visualize resting your hands and forearms (*holding* and *pressing* down; *Fu An*, 扶按) on a floating log. Keep relaxed and do not use unnecessary strength to maintain your posture. Use this parallel step posture for **Stage One** and **Stage Two** training.

**Stage One** (*Jing Zhong Qiu Song*, 静中求松): Acquire whole-body *relaxation* (*Song*, 松) from *stillness* (*Jing*, 静).

Visualize holding fragile paper balloons in your armpits, between your arms, under your chin, and between your knees. Applying too much force will break them while too little force will result in dropping them. Use skeletal support to maintain your *frame* (*Jian Jia*, 肩架) with minimum muscular tension; do not be conscious of your breathing; let your breathing be natural and instinctive; mentally, simultaneously, be mindful and detached. However, total relaxation and absolute *stillness* in relaxed-standing training will lead to “*empty-standing*” (*Kong Zhuang*, 空桩). On the other hand, if you use your musculature to maintain your posture with unnecessary tension and rigidity, turning your relaxed-standing into an endurance of strength contest, your relaxed-standing training becomes “*dead-standing*” (*Si Zhuang*, 死桩). Thus, you must use relaxation/tension exchange appropriately (*Song Er Bu Xie*, 松而不懈; *Jin Er Bu Jiang*, 紧而不僵); proper comprehension of relaxation and tension is necessary to mentally induce the *motion-in-stillness* (*Jing Zhong Zhi Dong*, 静中之动) into your relaxed-standing training. Use the following visualization (directed mental imagery) and mind-intent to guide (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力) your relaxation/tension exchange:

1. Visualize holding an imaginary ant under each foot. Imagine the ants attempt to escape backwards, shift your weight backward to prevent them from escaping; keep your toes grasping the ground. Then imagine them trying to escape forwards, shift your weight forward to keep them from going forward; keep your heels on the ground. Do this

mentally induced intentional forward/backward shift with minimal external movement. If the movement is too big, the imaginary ants can easily escape; you can lose your balance. Keep the movement small so that you are always in perfect balance. Visualize stepping down too heavily will kill the imaginary ants; lifting your heels will let them run away. Keep your heels on the ground while your weight shifts upward/forward and downward/backward.

2. Visualize standing in chest deep water with your hands and forearms resting on top of a floating log. As the water flows in from the front, shift your weight forward to meet it; press downward on the floating log as if lifting yourself upwards; twist your knees inwards and compress the imaginary spring between your knees (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋). As the water flows in from your back, shift your weight backward to meet it; release the downward press (as if to lift the log upwards slightly), twist your knees outwards and stretch the imaginary springs between your knees (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), sinking your body backwards and downwards. Do not put too much weight on your heels. Relaxation is achieved when you are simultaneously mindful and detached; when you become one with the imaginary surrounding water, not knowing whether the water is moving your body or if you are moving the water.

Do these *motionless-movement* (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动) exercises with “passive” mind-intent and with no brute strength (*Yong Yi Bu Yong Li*, 用意不用力). Keep the magnitude of your motion small.

**Stage Two** (*Song Zhong Qiu Zheng*, 松中求整): Develop whole-body *unity* (*Zheng Li*, 整力) from *relaxation* (*Song*, 松). Synthesize and harmonize mind-intent and force (*Yi Dao Li Dao*, 意到力到).

The primary goal is to perceive and develop the “*path-of-force-propagation*” (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路) through your properly *aligned* and *connected* whole-body (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯), to take up power from the ground (*Li Cong Di Qi*, 力从地起). In cultivating and nurturing this whole-body “*balanced-force*” (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力), you must adhere to: using curved external physical form to deliver linear force (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直); moving each body element only as part of your whole-body movement (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动); and incorporating the natural winding of your musculature, twisting your core and limbs concurrently (*Yi Dong Quan Shen Zhuan*, 一动全身转). The primary measure used to synthesizing your whole-body is the mentally induced “*isometric-opposing-force*” pairs (*Nei Wai Zheng Li*, 内外争力).

1. Visualize standing in chest deep water with your hands and forearms resting on top of a floating log. Visualize imaginary springs connecting your fingers to a distant wall, connecting your wrists, and connecting your wrists to your neck. As the imaginary water



flows in from your back, shift your weight backward to meet the pressure, sink your body downward and pull the imaginary springs and the log backward, downward, and outward, twist knees outwards, stretch the imaginary spring between your knees. Immediately, as the imaginary water flows from the front, shift your weight forward to meet its pressure, compress the imaginary springs towards the front wall and twist knees inwards, compress the imaginary spring between your knees; push the log forward, upward, and inward (lift the log upwards). Sense the forward/backward, upward/downward, and lateral open/close forces (*Liu Mian Mo Li*, 六面摸力). Shift your entire body to and fro to *feel* and *resist* the imaginary water motion (*Ti Yan Zu Li*, 体验阻力). Eventually, do this with mental tranquility, your mind between conscious-ness and subconscious-ness, simultaneously mindful and detached.

2. When you can perceive and *feel* the sensation of the resistance of the imaginary water on your body, you can add arms, legs and head movement to integrate your neuromuscular coordination into your whole-body movements. When you shift your weight backward, simultaneously stretch the imaginary springs connecting your fingers to the distant wall, compress the springs between your wrists and neck, and stretch the imaginary connecting spring between your wrists and knees. Pull your hands backward, upward, and outward with outward twisting of your limbs (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋). When you shift your weight forward, simultaneously compress the imaginary springs connecting your fingers to the distant wall, stretch the springs between your wrists and neck, and compress the imaginary spring between your wrists and knees. Push your hands forward, downward, and inward with inward twisting of your limbs (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋). This mentally induced intentional movement should be very small; as you pull your hands backward, upward, and outward, visualize your palms remain touching the surface of the water; as you push your hands forward, downward, and inward, visualize submerging you hands only to the back of your hands.

Initially, do these *motionless-movement* exercises slowly to feel and reinforce the sensation of the sequential overlapping concurrent movement of your joints and body elements in propagating the force from the ground to your hands (*Huan Yun Zhong Qiu*, 缓运中求). “Actively”, synthesize your neuromuscular coordination (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一) and merge all force components as *one* (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). In the beginning, you may focus your awareness, attention, and emphasis on any one force direction, but you should not neglect any of the other directions; although one direction may be dominant; forces in all directions are always present (*Liu Mian Tong Shi Mo Li*, 六面同时摸力), simultaneously. When practicing switching your focus from one dominant direction to another, it should be done at random; there should be no conscious sequence or pattern (*Da Luan Cheng Xu*, 打乱程序). The ideal mental state is to be aware of all directions and no direction in particular; you are simultaneously mindful and detached; mind-intent and force become inseparable, indistinguishable (*Yi Li Bu Fen*, 意力不分).

When you have mastered these two stages, you can proceed to training with the small-step *hold/press* posture to explore the use of relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) training to develop the “spring-like force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) and the closely related “spontaneous reflexes” (*Fan Ying*, 反应).

**Definition:** The “explosive force” (*Bao Fa Li*, 爆发力) is defined as the maximum whole-body force that you can deliver with a maneuver onto your opponent in the shortest time interval; the “spring-like force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) is defined as the crisp delivery of your whole-body force like the sudden releasing of a trapped coil-spring.

**Warning:** Before proceeding to the more advanced training of the next few stages, you must have mastered “proper whole-body *alignment* and *connected-ness*” (*Zheng Ti Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 整体连通一贯). You must be able to perceive the “*path-of-force-propagation*” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路) to take up power from the ground. If you are not ready, these more advanced training, at best, are a waste of your time and, at worst, will introduce errors that will be very difficult to correct. We maintain that even achieving whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调) does not guarantee your success in developing your “spring-like force” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) and/or your “explosive force” (*Bao Fa Li*, 爆发力). Remember, all your physical postures must adhere faithfully to the basic principle of using “*curved physical form to deliver linear force*” (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直).

In relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) training, with mental directed activities (*Yi Nian You Dao*, 意念诱导), you practice “*motion-in-stillness*” (*Jing Zhong Zhi Dong*, 静中之动). The purpose is to cultivate and develop your *balanced-force* (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) by synthesizing your mind-body into a resilient harmonious whole-body unity (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调). While doing the “*motionless-movement*” (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动) training, there are “*four touchstone states of perception*” (*Si Ru Jing Jie*, 四如境界); you would sense or perceive: proper relaxation as a thickness to the surrounding air and/or an added heaviness in your torso and limbs (*Shen Ru Qian Guan*, 身如铅灌), whole-body unity as if your body is forged in one piece (*Ti Zheng Ru Zhu*, 体整如铸), whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调) as a merging of your musculature to act as one coordinated unit (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一), and honing of your nerves and senses to a high level of sensitivity as if your hairs are standing on ends, interacting with the surrounding (*Mao Fa Ru Ji*, 毛发如戟). These “*four touchstone states of perception*” (*Si Ru*, 四如) are prerequisites for advance Yiquan training. We will illustrate using the small-step *hold/press* posture.

## **B. Small-Step *hold/press* Posture (*Ding Ba Bu Fu An Zhuang*, 丁八步扶按桩)**

Building on the foundations of the “*four touchstone states of perception*” (*Si Ru*, 四如), further development would merge relaxed-standing (*Fu An Zhuang*, 扶按桩), trial-and-feel (*Fu An*

*Shi Li*, 扶按试力), and power-discharge (*Fu An Fa Li*, 扶按发力) into one integrated exercise. Starting with the basic small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩), rotate your forearms to palms facing down and point your fingers to the front with your lead hand a little higher and forward of your rear hand. Prop your elbows out (*Heng Cheng Shu Bao*, 横撑竖抱). Visualize imaginary springs connecting your fingers to a distant wall, connecting your wrists, connecting your wrists to your neck, connecting your knees, and connecting your feet to your head (*Xiang Lian Xiang Zheng*, 相连相争). Keep all joints slightly flexed and unlocked (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直) to use “curved physical form to deliver linear force” (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直). Use this small-step posture for **Stage Three** and **Stage Four** training.

**Stage Three** (*Qiu Tan Li*, 求弹力): Develop your *spontaneous reflexes* (*Fan Ying*, 反应) and cultivate your whole-body *spring-like force* (*Tan Li*, 弹力) by mentally induced whole-body/core oscillation. The goal here is to develop every body element/component to behave like an “elastic spring” (*Bian Ti Si Tan Huang*, 遍体似弹簧). Any maneuver may be used; small magnitude motion against light resistance is the key training measure.

Start with large magnitude slow motion trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) and gradually advance towards small magnitude fast motion trial-and-feel and power-discharge (*Fa Li*, 发力). Slow motion large “swinging” movement training can not cultivate *Tan Li* (弹力). “Spring-like” or “whip-like” power-discharge (*Tan Li*, 弹力) is cultivated and nurtured by practicing rapid relaxation/tension exchanges (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) against light resistance, switching your awareness and focus attention from using force in one dominant direction to another by using small rapid whole-body/core oscillation (*Dong Dang*, 动荡), taking up power from the ground. Initially, you may select to practice in one single dimension, i.e., switching from downwards to upwards (*Fu/Chen*, 浮/沉), or from backwards to forwards (*Tun/Tu*, 吞/吐), or laterally from close to open (*Kai/He*, 开/合), reversing the internal/external isometric-opposing-forces-pairs (*Nei Wai Zheng Li*, 内外争力), compressing/extending the imaginary springs to generate this “spring-like” force. When cultivating this *Tan Li* (弹力), it is important to not to put too much weight on your heels (*Zu Gen Wei Xu*, 足跟为虚) to maintain whole-body elasticity. Let us illustrate this training with an example in the upward/downward direction:

1. Visualize standing in waist deep water with your hands and forearms resting on top of a floating wooden ball. Pushing off the ground with your lead foot, twisting knee outwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), shift your weight backwards and downwards, stretching the imaginary spring connecting your knees; press the imaginary wooden ball downwards, backwards, and outwards. Do not lean backwards at your hips; your backward movement should be like pushing your back backwards into a vertical wall by flexing your hip joint (*Tun*, 吞; *Chen*, 沉); your shoulder and your hip moving backwards simultaneously. Immediately, grasp the imaginary wooden ball, pushing off the ground with your rear leg to shift your whole-body upwards and forward, twisting knees inwards

(*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), compress the imaginary spring between your knees, lift the imaginary wooden ball upwards to shoulder level (*Fu*, 浮) and throw it forward like throwing a basket ball (*Tu*, 吐). Keep the magnitude of your motion small (invisible).

2. Visualize you have an imaginary pulley attached to the ceiling; one end of the imaginary rope passing through this pulley is attached to an imaginary heavy weight; hold the other end of the rope lightly with your hands. From a completely relaxed whole-body harmony state, shift your weight backward and downward, twisting your knees outwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), stretching the imaginary springs between your knees (*Xiang Lian Xiang Zheng*, 相连相争) and compressing the imaginary spring between your rear hip and the ground. Simultaneously, as you move your hips backward and downward, snap your hands downward with inward twisting of your forearms (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), focusing your power discharge downward, backward, and slightly outward (*Hou Xia Fa Li*, 后下发力). It helps to visualize tensing and squeezing a balloon between your chin and your neck while pushing slightly upward at the top of your head. Visualize using your whole-body to pull up the heavy weight; do not lean backward. After momentarily tensing your entire body, immediately shift your weight forward and upward; twist your knees inwards; twist your forearms outwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋) and “push” (*Song*, 送) the imaginary rope upwards and forwards letting the imaginary heavy weight back down. Relax completely and return to your relaxed spring-like whole-body harmony state.

When you have mastered the neuromuscular coordination, you may select to develop your *Tan Li* (弹力) in the upward/downward direction. Begin by reducing the magnitude of your forward/backward movement and increase the speed of the downward/upward reversal with appropriate twisting of your limbs (*Luo Xuan Li*, 螺旋力). You cultivate and develop the up/down *Tan Li* by the practice of *Zheng Li* (争力), reduce the magnitude of your movement, and increase the speed of your upward/downward oscillation (*Dong Dang*, 动荡).

3. You will need a partner/trainer for developing your spontaneous reflexes. Stand in the small step *hold/press* posture (*Ding Ba Bu Fu An Zhuang*, 丁八步扶按桩) facing your partner/trainer with his hands on your shoulders. Without telegraphing his intention, he should “suddenly” push your shoulders downwards towards your rear. Absorb this push by sinking backwards (*Tun*, 吞) slightly and immediately use your whole-body spring-like elastic force (*Tan Li*, 弹力) against this external resistance force to “knock” your partner backwards (*Tu*, 吐). Your reflexes must be very fast in order to meet his force before he withdraws it.

NOTES: *Tan Li* must be built on the foundation of whole-body balanced-force (*Zheng Ti Hun Yuan Li*, 整体浑元力), merging all force components as “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). For any maneuver/technique, you must synthesize and coordinate your action muscles into total harmony (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一) to provide a clean path-of-force-propagation (*Jing Lu Tong*

**Chang**, 劲路通畅) from the ground and maximize the relaxation of your antagonistic muscles to minimize interference to attain extreme speed.

Thus, the progression of **Stage Three** development is to merge the force components into one *whole-body force* (**Zheng Li**, 整力); from this, you cultivate the *spring-like force* (**Tan Li**, 弹力) and later on the *explosive power discharge* (**Bao Fa Li**, 爆发力). This is accomplished by synthesizing relaxed-standing (**Zhan Zhuang**, 站桩), small slow motion and small fast motion trial-and-feel (**Shi Li**, 试力), and power discharge (**Fa Li**, 发力). The *spring-like force* (**Tan Li**, 弹力) is the result of fast relaxation/tension exchanges (**Song Jin Zhuan Huan**, 松紧转换) and rapid whole-body/core oscillations from switching force directions (由整体动荡中求弹力). Keep the magnitude of your motion small (**Quan Da Cun Jing**, 拳打寸劲); if it is too big, your *frame* will *deform* (**Xing San**, 形散) and your power-discharge will not be “*clean and crisp*” (**Cui**, 脆). Comprehend and employ proper relaxation and tension; devise training procedures to achieve your goal; if you relax and/or tense in-appropriately, your switching speed and spring-like force will suffer.

With the previous stages as foundation, we will explore the development/cultivation of the “*explosive power-discharge*” (**Bao Fa Li**, 爆发力) using relaxed-standing (**Zhan Zhuang**, 站桩), trial-and-feel (**Shi Li**, 试力), and power-discharge (**Fa Li**, 发力) training.

**Criteria of fighting maneuvers:** In general, “*fast attack*” (**Kuai Gong**, 快攻) is an effective fighting tactic. Its success hinges on minimizing your “attack time interval”; your strike must land on your target before your opponent’s blow lands (**Hou Fa Xian Zhi**, 后发先至). While relax initiation increases the speed and acceleration of your movement (**Kuai Su**, 快速), spontaneous coordinated whole-body harmonized movement (**Zheng Ti Xie Tiao**, 整体协调), without superfluous movement, is the fastest, and would have the best chance to land first. Therefore:

1. To minimize your “*reaction time*”, you should select maneuvers that are *simple* (**Jian Jie**, 简捷) and close to your instinctive natural movement.
2. To minimize the “*execution time*” of your attack, you should minimize the magnitude of their movement; minimize the distance from start to finish (**Quan Da Cun Jing**, 拳打寸劲).
3. To maximize the *sudden-ness* of your spring-like power-discharge and to *startle* your opponent (**Jing Tan Jing**, 惊弹劲), you should maximize your “*agility for change*” (**Tu Bian**, 突变), your ability to switch from one maneuver to another unexpected maneuver; operating at a faster (or different) tempo inside your opponent’s time scale to generate confusion and disorder.

A maneuver is effective only when it becomes “*habit*”. There are no instant “*habits*”. Repetition is the mother of all skills. You must practice the movement of an “effective fighting maneuver” to deliver “*explosive external power*” repeatedly until they become second nature, become spontaneous reflexes. From the foundation of proper whole-body *alignment* and *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯), study and perceive the kinesthetic interaction/coordination of your body components in the concurrent sequential overlapping motion. Everything must come together to keep the “path-of-force-propagation” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路) pure and clean to take up power from the ground. Rapid contraction/extension of the action muscles and total relaxation of the antagonistic muscles are necessary prerequisites of a focus power-discharge (*Fa Li*, 发力). On top of that, “change of momentum” generated from whole-body/core movement (*Dong Dang*, 动荡) and/or oscillation (*Zhen Dong*, 震动, *Bo Lang*, 波浪), gravitational force (*Zhong Li Bo*, 重力波), and natural twisting of your core/limbs (*Luo Xuan*, 螺旋), when used appropriately, may provide additional power.

**Definitions:** The “*contact time*” of your blow on a target is the time it takes to punch through to the back side of your opponent (*Li Tou Di Bei*, 力透敌背). “To minimize the contact time” should not be interpreted as “immediate withdrawal on contact”; your blow must continue to accelerate as long as there is contact and strike through to the back of your opponent. Using a hard “*impact/contact point*” would minimize the contact time.

Let us review the dynamics of “*releasing/discharging power/force*” (*Fa Li*, 发力) onto your opponent. Facts:

1. Releasing force onto your opponent with no acceleration of the “*contact point*” would result in a constant speed push. This will not be an effective fighting maneuver.
2. Releasing force onto your opponent with moderate acceleration of the contact point would result in a relatively long “*contact time interval*”, whole-body force acting on the whole-body of your opponent, and the whole-body target would move physically with little or no damage.
3. Releasing force onto your opponent with extreme acceleration of the contact point would result in minimal contact time interval, whole-body force acting on your opponent’s localize target, and little whole-body physical movement of the target while causing damage.

Everything being equal, using a hard “*impact/contact point*” of minimal surface area of contact would result in maximum damage to your target.

To convert the “*spring-like force*” (*Tan Li*, 弹力) into “*explosive external force*” (*Bao Fa Wei Wai Li*, 爆发为外力), you will need to employ the techniques of breath control (grunting; *Shi Sheng*, 试声) to marshal the entire body into concerted action, to “*suddenly tense*” your whole-body (*Tu Ran Yi Jin*, 突然一紧); tense your core and limbs to increase mass, to *focus* your

power. Here, *agility* (**Tu Bian**, 突变), the ability to *suddenly* switch from one maneuver to another, is of vital importance.

The power-discharge (**Fa Li**, 发力) process involves: Relax and bend your joints to *store* energy (**Xu**, 蓄), extend and flex your joints with *elastic* spring-like force (**Tan**, 弹), discharge clean and crisp force *suddenly* instantaneously as if *startled* (**Jing**, 惊), and *explode* your internal energy as a *burst* of external force onto your opponent (**Zha**, 炸). Whole-body harmony (**Xie Tiao**, 协调), synthesizing your musculature as one (**Ji Rou Ru Yi**, 肌肉如一), relaxation of antagonistic muscles (**Wu Guan Ji Rou Fang Song**, 无关肌肉放松), minimize your internal interference (**Jian Xiao Gan Rao**, 减小干扰), and agility (**Tu Bian**, 突变), your ability to quickly switch from one maneuver to another are required elements. You must accelerate your blow through your target, focus your power by tensing your musculature on contact, and *drill* (**Tui Si Zuan**, 腿似钻) your lead leg, to take up power from the ground and to arrest your forward movement to transfer momentum onto your opponent.

The training method consists of executing the selected maneuver:

1. In solo exercises with no resistance (**Kong Cao**, 空操; **Dan Cao**, 单操), using various “attacking angles”,
2. Onto a partner and/or on various targets with appropriate resistance (**Ti Yan Zu Li**, 体验阻力), and
3. In competitive push-hands (**Tui Shou**, 推手) and realistic sparring (**San Shou**, 散手) training.

We will illustrate power-discharge training (**Fa Li**, 发力) with the small-step *hold/press* trial-and-feel (**Fu An Shi Li**, 丁八步扶按试力) maneuver.

**Stage Four** (**Qiu Bao Fa Li**, 求爆发力): To be useful, you must be able to *explode* your internal energy as a high speed *burst* of external force, onto your opponent (**Bao Fa Nei Li Wei Wai Li**, 爆发内力为外力) via an effective maneuver/technique. Practice power-discharge (**Fa Li**, 发力) in stages: large fast motion with soft focus, large fast motion with hard focus, and small fast motion with focus and *sudden* change (**Tu Bian**, 突变).

1. Solo Exercise (**Kong Cao**, 空操): Start from the small-step *hold/press* posture (**Ding Ba Bu Fu An Zhuang**, 丁八步扶按桩); visualize standing in waist deep water with your forearms resting on an imaginary floating ball. *Drill* (**Tui Si Zuan**, 腿似钻) and push off your front leg, twisting both legs outward (**Wai Luo Xuan**, 外螺旋), shift your weight slightly backwards (**Tun**, 吞) stretching the imaginary spring between your knees.

Simultaneously, twisting your forearms inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), press the imaginary floating ball backwards, downwards and outwards. Immediately, *drill* and push off your rear leg, twisting both legs inward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), take up power from the ground, squeeze the imaginary spring between your knees, shift your weight forward (*Tu*, 吐), lift the imaginary ball upwards to mouth level and throw it forward, twisting forearms inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋) and rotate palms forwards. Keep your wrists relaxed; visualize *flinging* the imaginary wet sand sticking to your hands forward. As you visualize pushing through your imaginary target, check your forward movement to transfer momentum onto your target by *drilling* down your front leg, focus your power by *suddenly tensing* your whole-body (*Tu Ran Yi Jin*, 突然一紧) to discharge power (*Fa Li*, 发力). Immediately relax and withdraw your hands to your starting position as if you have touched on a red hot iron plate. Do not push your hands beyond your front foot toes. Your movements must be “clean, crisp and small”, with sudden change of directional movements.

Use different “attack angles” for your blow: forward/upward, forward/downward, etc. Practice the maneuver with minimal internal/external resistance (*Kong Cao*, 空操); you must not *feel* the strength in your blow (*Bu Jiao Li Zhi Li*, 不觉力之力); it must be *effort-less*. If you *feel* you have strength, you are tensing pre-maturely; your blow is slow and ineffective. Keep shoulders relaxed and down. Extend/contract action muscles; relax antagonistic muscles. Delivery must be relaxed, tensing/focusing only momentarily at the very last second. Punch through your target; use your full reach but do not lock/straighten any joint (your elbow); deliver linear force with curve form (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直).

When you have synthesized the whole-body coordinated maneuver, reduce the magnitude of your movement to zero. Use mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to guide, merge and strengthen the “path-of-force-propagation” (*Jing Lu*, 劲路) with little or no external movement.

2. Resistance exercise (*Ti Yan Zu Li*, 体验阻力): You must *experience* the *resistance* of discharging power onto a partner to get the *feel* of timing, of distance interval, of attack angle, and of the force. Start from the small-step *hold/press* posture (*Ding Ba Bu Fu An Zhuang*, 丁八步扶按桩) with your hands on the shoulders or chest (with proper protective equipment) of your partner. Examine the effective-ness of your *Fa Li* (发力) by releasing/discharging power onto your partner.

You must be able to *explode* your internal strength in a high speed *burst* of external force (*Ba Li Da Dao Shen Wai*, 把力打到身外), transferring momentum onto your partner to push him back sharply. A clean crisp discharge is whip-like and spring-like. It should include the following attributes:

- a. Elastic spring-like force from rapid muscular contraction/extension, flexing of your joints, and core oscillation (*Tan*, 弹),



- b. Snapping tangential component force resulting from rapid rotation/twisting of your limbs and core (*Dou*, 抖), and
- c. Linear force resulting from whole-body momentum transfer/exchange (*Zhuang*, 撞).

All force components must merge as “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). Your discharge/release of power must penetrate to the back of your opponent (*Li Tou Di Bei*, 力透敌背).

Up to now, we have described the balanced force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) discharge that “moves your opponent” physically. However, combat effective power-discharge should also “damage your opponent”. This requires concentrating/focusing the power-discharge of your whole-body balanced force onto a small hard “impact/contact surface area” and punching through your target with maximum acceleration. We will explore this through the examples of “switching” (*Tu Bian*, 突变) from the *hold/press* (*Fu An*, 扶按桩) posture to the upward punch (*Zuan Quan*, 钻拳) and the downward punch (*Zai Quan*, 栽拳).

**Stage Five** (*Quan Da Cun Jing*, 拳打寸劲): A characteristic of Yiquan combat maneuvers is using your opponent’s guard against him (*Tui Shou Duan Shou Jie He*, 推手断手结合). Keep the magnitude of your defensive and offensive motion small. Maintain perfect balance at all times.

1. Downward/backward power discharge switch to upward punch (*Zuan Quan*, 钻拳): Start from the small-step *hold/press* posture (*Ding Ba Bu Fu An Zhuang*, 丁八步扶按桩). Visualize your forearms are on top of your opponent’s forearms. *Drill* (*Tui Si Zuan*, 腿似钻) and push off your front leg, twisting both legs outward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), shift your weight slightly downwards and backwards (*Chen*, 沉; *Tun*, 吞) stretching the imaginary spring between your knees. Simultaneously, twisting your forearms inwards (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), *press* (*Xia Ya*, 下压) the forearms of your imaginary opponent downwards, backwards, and outwards. Immediately, *drill* and push off your rear leg, twisting both legs inward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), take up power from the ground, squeeze the imaginary spring between your knees, shift your weight upwards and forward (*Fu*, 浮; *Tu*, 吐). Simultaneously, *drill* your front leg to provide a clean path-of-force-propagation from the ground while executing a lead hand upward punch (*Zuan Quan*, 钻拳) towards your imaginary opponent’s central line (*Zhong Xian*, 中线). Immediately relax and return to your starting posture.
2. Backward/upward power release switch to downward punch (*Zai Quan*, 栽拳): Start from the small-step *hold/press* posture (*Ding Ba Bu Fu An Zhuang*, 丁八步扶按桩).

Visualize your forearms are below your opponent's forearms. *Drill* (*Tui Si Zuan*, 腿似钻) and push off your front leg, twisting both legs outward (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), shift your weight slightly upwards and backwards (*Fu*, 浮; *Tun*, 吞) stretching the imaginary spring between your knees. Simultaneously, twisting your forearms outwards (*Wai Luo Xuan*, 外螺旋), *hook/hang* (*Gou Gua*, 勾挂) the forearms of your imaginary opponent upwards, backwards, and outwards. Keep the magnitude of this small. Immediately, *drill* and push off your rear leg, twisting both legs inward (*Nei Luo Xuan*, 内螺旋), take up power from the ground, squeeze the imaginary spring between your knees, shift your weight downwards and forward (*Chen*, 沉; *Tu*, 吐). Simultaneously, *drill* your front leg to provide a clean path-of-force-propagation from the ground while executing a lead hand downward punch (*Zai Quan*, 栽拳) towards your imaginary opponent's central line (*Zhong Xian*, 中线). Immediately relax and return to your starting posture.

Pay special attention to the proper use of the internal/external *isometric-opposing-force* pairs (*Zheng Li*, 争力). When you have mastered the whole-body coordinated movement of the maneuvers in slow large motion, proceed to practice with fast large and small motion. Eventually, you must minimize the magnitude, so the movement becomes *motionless-movement* (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动), so only *motion-in-stillness* (*Jing Zhong Zhi Dong*, 静中之动) is retained, so only your mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) remains.

We have outlined a procedure/method to combine/synthesize relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩), trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力), and power-discharge (*Fa Li*, 发力) training using the *hold/press* (*Fu An Zhuang*, 扶按桩) posture to develop/cultivate the balanced-force (*Mo Li*, 摸力). This balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) must be balanced in all six directions (*Liu Mian Ping Heng Jun Zheng*, 六面平衡均整); it may have a dominant direction but must not have an absolute direction.

The examples given are from my experience; you should select/design exercises suitable for your needs; train with a purpose/goal. The key is the proper use of mind-intent (*Yi*, 意). Initially, use mind-intent to guide/lead your internal strength (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力) to develop your balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力). Seek mind-body relaxation and whole-body coordination (*Li Qiu Song Zheng*, 力求松整). Then, synthesize your mind-body so the power goes to wherever your mind-intent goes (*Yi Dao Li Dao*, 意到力到). Your whole-body becomes “*elastic and spring-like*” (*Bian Ti Si Tan Huang*, 遍体似弹簧). Finally, merge your mind-intent and balanced-force so they become inseparable and indistinguishable (*Yi Li Bu Fen*, 意力不分). Action becomes spontaneous reflexes (*Bu Qi Zi Ran Zhi*, 不期自然至).

## Appendix E: Kicks and Knee Strikes (*Tui Fa*, 腿法)

NOTES: This is adapted from an essay on the training procedures for kicks and knee strikes. It is an example of a training and conditioning sequence for practical maneuvers/techniques.

We will explore the Yiquan training procedures for kicks and knee strikes. The procedures are applicable to any selected maneuver/technique.

The training and conditioning methods are based on *Yao's* style Yiquan (姚氏意拳) as taught by Master *Yao ChengRong* (姚承荣老师) of *Beijing Zhong Yi Wu Guan* (北京中意武馆), Beijing, China. (Web Site: <http://www.yiquan-zywg.com/english/home.html>)

Yiquan is very careful about using kicks and knee strikes, believing that lifting one's leg to kick drastically reduces stability, and that leg maneuvers/techniques are effective only if kept low, and done when your opponent's posture integrity is compromised. The kicking movement must be *natural* and conform to Yiquan's principle of using "*curve physical form to deliver linear force*" (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直). In general, you should kick and withdraw your leg quickly as if kicking onto a red-hot iron plate. On contact, tense and focus all muscles as your leg smashes through the target; your kick should accelerate as long as there is physical contact. If possible, do not use kicks and knee strikes without hand contact with your opponent to provide stability. Firm foundations in footwork (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步) and relaxed-standing in one-leg postures (*Du Li Zhuang*, 独立桩, *Dan Tui Yi Tuo Zhuang*, 单腿依托桩) are keys to clean execution of kicking techniques.

## Principles

All Yiquan maneuvers/techniques training and conditioning must include:

1. Relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) with *motionless-movement* to seek, sense, and cultivate your whole-body balanced-force (*Mo Li*, 摸力),
2. Trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) with kinesthesia to perceive the pathways of force transmission (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路) and to synthesize your neuromuscular

coordination, harmony of actions, and harmony of forces (*Ba Li Shi Chu*, 把力试出), to merge all force components as “one”,

3. Power discharge/release (*Fa Li*, 发力) to cultivate the ability to “explode” your internal power as external force onto your opponent (*Ba Li Da Dao Shen Wai*, 把力打到身外), and
4. Push-hands (*Tui Shou*, 推手) and sparring (*San Shou*, 散手) to learn from realistic experience (*Ti Yan*, 体验) the appropriate timing, distance, and angles of attack of executing the specific maneuvers/techniques (*Pai Wei*, 拍位).

While each maneuver/technique requires its own special relaxed-standing postures, trial-and-feel exercises (in fixed-step and free-step), and power discharge/release conditioning; they must still adhere faithfully to the proven principles and sound doctrines of Yiquan (*Quan Quan Fu Ying*, 拳拳服膺), to deliver the balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) from curve physical forms (*Xing Qu Li Zhi*, 形曲力直), to employ whole-body harmony of actions (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调) with optimal *alignment* and *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯), and to merge all force components as “one” (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一). The actions of each body element must be the result of your whole-body neuromuscular coordinated movement (*Yi Dong Wu Bu Dong*, 一动无不动). To achieve these, you must use proper *body mechanics* (*Shen Fa*, 身法) with musculoskeletal support (*Gu Ge Zhi Cheng*, 骨骼支撑) and appropriate neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchanges (*Song Jin Yun Yong Zi Ru*, 松紧运用自如). Remember: there are no advanced and/or secret maneuvers/techniques; they are only basic skills (fundamentals) being performed really well.

All kicking maneuvers are based on the wading step footwork (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步). A firm foundation of the wading steps is a prerequisite; as you step forward/backward, maintain the basic on-guard *frame* (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩), elbows prop out as if holding imaginary balloons in your armpits. (See Chapter 5: Footwork for details of footwork training.) Keep your supporting leg slightly bend (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直) as you push off the ground. Visualize doing a forward snap kick as you drive your stepping leg forward from your hip (*Shen Ti Dai Dong*, 身体带动); visualize stretching the imaginary springs between your knees and between your supporting leg hip and your stepping leg knee.

## Procedures and Methods

All categories of Yiquan training and conditioning exercises are inter-related and inseparable. You must train all categories concurrently to re-pattern your whole-body harmony and to merge your neuromuscular movements as “one” (*Ji Rou Ru Yi*, 肌肉如一). In the following, we have separated these training categories only for ease of presentation.

## 1. Relaxed-Standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩)

When kicking, lifting one leg off the ground greatly reduces your stability (*Tai Tui Ban Bian Kong*, 抬腿半边空). Employing the *ground path*, optimal body *alignment*, and *connected-ness* (*Lian Tong Yi Guan*, 连通一贯) become absolutely necessary to take up power from push off the ground. Relaxed-standing (*Zhan Zhuang*, 站桩) lets you seek, sense, and cultivate your balanced-force (*Hun Yuan Li*, 浑元力) in relative *stillness* (*Mo Li*, 摸力). However, *relaxation* is only a requirement of *Zhan Zhuang* (站桩); without visualization (*Yi Nian You Dao*, 意念诱导) or mental imagery to direct your neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchanges (*Song Jin Zhuan Huan*, 松紧转换) in your “*motion-in-stillness*” (*Jing Zhong Zhi Dong*, 静中之动), your relaxed-standing will be devoid of content (*Kong Zhuang*, 空桩). Initially, you should use your mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to induce relatively “large smooth movement” in your neuromuscular relaxation/tension exchange cycles: movement/tension (*Dong/Jin*, 动/紧) – stillness/relaxation (*Jing/Song*, 静/松). When you have mastered whole-body harmony (*Zheng*, 整), you must internalize the relaxation/tension exchange movement; reduce the “*motion-in-stillness*” to become “*motionless-movement*” (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动).

### A. One-Leg Standing Postures (*Du Li Zhuang*, 独立桩)

1. Stand in the left lead small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩). Shift your weight onto your rear leg and lift your front foot slightly off the ground with the left sole parallel to the ground. Visualize imaginary springs connecting your neck to your front foot and imaginary springs under your front foot. Use mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to guide your *motionless-movement* (*Bu Dong Zhi Dong*, 不动之动); relax and do not use brute strength (*Yong Yi Bu Yong Li*, 用意不用力). Press downward slightly with your front foot while pushing your head slightly upwards, compress the imaginary spring under your foot; feel the vertical internal opposing-force-pair between your neck and foot (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力). Then imagine a string attached to you front knee, pulling your foot upward, stretch the imaginary spring under your foot, compressing the imaginary spring between your foot and neck. Next, visualize kicking (driving with your hip) your front foot forward, stretching the imaginary spring between your knees; or backward, or to the left, and or to the right (*Qian Hou Zuo You Zheng Li*, 前后左右争力). Practice feeling, sensing, and perceiving (*Mo Li*, 摸力) the transmission of the balanced-force components through every link in your body (kinesthetic experience), from taking up the power from the ground and transmitting it through “neuromuscular pathways” to your kicking leg. Internalize your *motionless-movement* i.e., minimize your movement but do not remain *absolutely still*.

Do not forget to maintain your *frame* and the on-guard ready posture; prop your elbows out and hug the imaginary tree with your arms; keep hands well up to guard your central line. Make adjustment as necessary to be comfortable, relaxed, natural, and at ease. This is the standing posture training and conditioning for forward (front) snap kicks (*Dian Jiao*, 点脚).

2. Stand in the left lead small-step posture (*Hun Yuan Zhuang*, 浑元桩). Shift your weight onto your left front leg. Bring your right rear leg up to the front; raise your right knee to navel level. Keep your right knee bend; right foot sole parallel to the ground; turn your right foot sideways with toes pointing right, inside edge facing forward. Visualize imaginary springs connecting your right foot to your neck and spring under your right foot. Use mind-intent to guide your *motionless-movement*. Compress the spring under your right foot; stretching the imaginary spring between your right foot and right shoulder, push your head slightly upwards. Feel the vertical internal opposing-force-pair between your neck and foot. Then imagine a string attached to you right front knee, pulling your foot upward, stretch the imaginary spring under your foot; compressing the imaginary spring between your right foot and neck.

Keep elbows propped out; hug your imaginary tree. Internalize your *motionless-movement*; minimize your movement but do not remain *absolutely still*. This is the standing posture training and conditioning for thrust kicks (*Deng Ta Jiao*, 蹬踏脚).

## B. One-Leg Supported Posture (*Dan Tui Yi Tuo Zhuang*, 单腿依托桩)

1. Stand in the left lead small-step posture in front of a high stool (about navel height). Shift your weight onto your front (left) leg; keep it slightly bend (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直). Lift your rear (right) leg and place your right foot on the stool; inside edge facing upwards, toes pulled back pointing right; heel pushed forward. Visualize standing in waist deep water with your right leg placed on top of a floating log. Mentally, slightly thrust kick forward, downward, and inward, stretching the imaginary spring between your right foot and right shoulder (e.g., visualize drawing your right shoulder back while pushing your right heel forward, downward, and inward); thrust your hip forward and rotate your kicking leg outwards as you thrust it out. This is the standing posture training for forward thrust kick (*Deng Ta Jiao*, 蹬踏脚).
2. Stand in the left lead small-step posture to the left of a high stool (about navel height). Shift your weight onto your front (left) leg; keep it slightly bend (*Si Qu Fei Zhi*, 似曲非直). Lift your rear (right) leg and place your right foot on the stool; outside edge facing upwards, toes pulled back pointing front; heel pushed forward. Visualize standing in waist deep water with your right leg placed on top of a floating log. Mentally, slightly thrust kick sideways, forward, and downward, stretching the imaginary spring between your right foot and left shoulder (e.g., visualize drawing your left shoulder back while pushing your right heel forward); twist your hips and rotate your kicking leg inwards as

you thrust your leg out. This is the standing posture training for lateral thrust kick (*Heng Duo Jiao*, 横跺脚).

Maintain your *frame* and the on-guard ready posture; prop your elbows out and hug the imaginary tree with your arms; keep hands well up to guard your central line. Make adjustment as necessary to be comfortable, relaxed, natural, and at ease.

These one-legged relaxed-standing postures are preparation training for kicking techniques. Sense resistance and seek the equilibrium state along the vertical (up/down) axis between your kicking leg and the rest of your body. Develop the ability to discharge/release the balanced-force while standing on one leg. Visualize hugging your imaginary tree between your arms and body; it touches every part of your body. Pay special attention to the vertical opposing-force-pair of your un-weighted foot and neck. Consciously practice kinesthetic perception of your whole-body coordinated neuromuscular movements to achieve whole-body harmony and to cultivate the balanced-force while standing on one leg (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路).

Practicing relaxed-standing in the large-step posture (*Tame-the-tiger* posture, *Fu Hu Zhuang*, 伏虎桩) also augments stepping and kicking training by increasing your lower body strength and whole-body stability.

## 2. Trial-and-Feel (*Shi Li*, 试力)

The following are primary trial-and-feel (*Shi Li*, 试力) exercises for kicks. When you lift one leg to kick, you greatly decrease your stability; therefore, kicking should be used sparingly and not be higher than waist level.

Use mind-intent (*Yi*, 意) to guide your movement and force (*Yi Yi Ling Li*, 以意领力); mentally induce the perception of isometric-opposite-force-pairs (*Zheng Li*, 争力) between different body elements; feel, perceive, and learn from kinesthetic experience the pathways of force transmission (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路) of the balanced-force from taking up power from the ground to your kicking leg (*Yi Guan Zhi Li*, 一贯之力). While the dominant component of the isometric-opposite-force-pair is up/down (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力), you should perceive opposing-force-pairs in all six primary directions (*Liu Mian Mo Li*, 六面摸力): forward/backward, lateral left/right, and upward/downward. Merge all force components as *one* (*Quan Shen Li Yi*, 全身力一).

## A. Stationary Stepping

This is a *Shi Li* (试力) exercise for snap and angled swing kicks.

Stand erect. Lift the hands comfortably to your sides for balance; visualize holding onto imaginary hand railings. Sink your weight into your left (slightly bent supporting) leg. Lift your right foot slightly off the ground, sole parallel to the ground. Visualize there is a small sand bag balanced over the top of your right foot. Using your torso (core), hip, and leg, move your right (non-supporting) leg slowly forward then one foot's width to your right, “*delivering*” the imaginary sand bag to your right front until your right knee is almost straight (where you would place your right foot for the right lead small-step posture). Keep your right foot close to but do not lower your right foot to the ground; visualize stretching the imaginary springs connecting your right foot to your right shoulder and between your knees. Slowly, using your whole-body, pull your right leg back and deliver the imaginary sand bag to your back and right until your right knee is almost straight. Keep the imaginary sand bag from falling off your foot.

Variations of this exercise may include moving your right foot backward, to your side, then forward circling clockwise, or forward, to your side, then backward circling counter-clockwise, etc. Repeat the similar exercise with your left leg.

## B. Pushing Springs with Your Foot

This is a *Shi Li* (试力) exercise for thrust kicks and knee strikes.

1. Stand in the small-step posture. Visualize imaginary springs attaching your front foot to the ground and to your neck. Slowly pull your front knee upward to navel level; keep your sole parallel to the ground. Visualize stretching the imaginary springs under your foot (feel the spring tension pulling down on your foot) and compressing the imaginary springs between the foot and the neck; keep your toes pointing towards the front (forward). Now slowly press your foot down. Visualize compressing the springs under your foot and stretching the springs between the foot and the neck. Repeat the above exercise with turning the outside edge of your foot forward (*Heng Duo Jiao*, 横跺脚), then with turning the inside edge of your foot forward (*Deng Ta Jiao*, 蹬踏脚). You can also start with the outside edge forward and end with the inside edge forward, and vice versa.
2. Assume the left lead small-step posture. Drive all your weight into the forward foot and balance over it as you bring the right rear leg forward; project the right foot slightly forward of the left foot at roughly knee height above the ground with the toes pointing to the front, sole parallel to the ground. Visualize imaginary springs under the right foot connecting it to the ground, as well as imaginary springs connecting the right foot to the neck. Slowly and evenly step (thrust) your right foot forward and downward, rotating the inside edge forward, visualize compressing the spring under your foot. Feel the pull on



the imaginary springs connected to your neck and right shoulder. Do not let your foot touch the ground. Slowly bring the right foot up and feel the relative tension/relaxation exchange in the respective imaginary springs.

Variations include twisting the right kicking foot toes to your left, rotating the outside edge forward, while visualizing stretching the imaginary spring between your right foot and your left shoulder. That is with the toes turning from right to left. Perform this exercise with both legs. Feel with the whole-body; allow your body to kinesthetically experience the whole-body neuromuscular coordination.

### 3. Basic Kicks and Knee Strikes *Shi Li* (试力) and *Fa Li* (发力)

Initially, practice the following leg maneuvers in slow fixed-step (*Ding Bu*, 定步) *Shi Li* (试力) mode. Begin by using slow large motion to ingrain the motion into your muscle memory. When you have achieved whole-body harmony in your movement, you can use fast large motion, slow small motion, and fast small motion, starting from different initial positions, to sense the pathways of force transmission (*Xun Zhao Jing Lu*, 寻找劲路). Then, you must practice them in free-step (*Huo Bu*, 活步) mode using soft (*Song*, 松) and focus (*Jin*, 紧) *Fa Li* (发力).

#### A. Snap Kicks (*Dian Jiao*, 点脚)

These are based on the wading step (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步) footwork. Limit your snap kicks to below hip level. Execute it with comfortable natural ease (*Shun Qi Zi Ran*, 顺其自然), keep your balance (equilibrium) and combine your stepping with your kicking.

1. **Front Snap Kick (*Zheng Ti*, 正踢):** If distance is appropriate, you can use a low short snap kick to your opponent's ankle or shin. Push off your supporting leg to drive your whole-body forward. Drive your kicking leg forward with your hip; keep your knee and ankle loose as you snap your foot forward using your hip and knee as hinges. Snap your shoulder backward for balance. Maintain your on-guard posture and balance; drive with your hip and thigh, stretch the imaginary springs between your kicking foot and your head, and between your knees. Your upper torso should pivot backwards on the side of your kicking leg i.e., when snap kicking with your left foot, you pivot your upper torso to your left and vice versa; your upper and lower torso twist in opposite directions to maintain equilibrium and stability (*Shen Ti Luo Xuan Ning Zhuan*, 身体螺旋拧转). Low front snap kick targets your opponent's shin (or ankle) and should be delivered from your rear leg. When targeting the shin or ankle, the kicking foot should be lowered as it moves forward. After snap kicking your target, withdraw your foot as quickly as possible as if you have kicked onto a red-hot iron plate. Whether you hit your target or not are

less important than keeping your posture integrity and balance. Positioning your foot for your next step as you set it down.

Example: From the left lead small-step posture, lead or feint with your left hand finger jab; immediately snap kick with your right foot to your opponent's shin; or snap kick with your left shin into your opponent's left lead leg inner thigh or knee.

2. **Side Snap Kick (*Ce Ti*, 侧踢):** From your left lead small-step posture, drive all your weight into the forward left foot and balance on it as you bring the right rear leg forward; project the right foot slightly forward of the left foot at roughly knee height above the ground with the toes pointing to the front, sole parallel to the ground. Push off your supporting leg; drive your kicking leg with your hip; visualize stretching the imaginary springs between your knees, and between your head and your kicking foot; snap kick your right foot to your right front.

Example: Side-step and counter an attack with a side snap kick delivered with the outside edge of your foot to your opponent's short rib or knee. Or deliver a side snap kick with your shin to the outside of your opponent's thigh.

## **B. Thrust Kicks (*Deng Ta Jiao*, 蹬踏脚)**

1. **Inside edge forward thrust kick (*Deng Ta Jiao*, 蹬踏脚):** Keep your lead supporting leg slightly bent. Lift your rear kicking knee to navel level, turn the inside edge of your foot forward, toe outward, thrust your hip forward and straighten your leg to thrust kick your foot forward and downward (*Deng Ta*, 蹬踏) towards your opponent's knee or lower body, stretch the imaginary spring between your kicking foot and your same side shoulder; your upper torso should pivot towards the same side as your kicking leg; when you are thrust kicking with your left leg, pivot your upper torso towards your left and use your right hand to guard. Targets are lower abdomen, thigh, knee or shin. On contact, immediately thrust downwards along your opponent's body axis; step down and into your opponent. When releasing power downward, pay attention to pushing your head up slightly to gain power from the up/down isometric-opposing-force-pair along your spine. Keep your hands high in on-guard position and maintain your fighting posture; keep your balance by twisting your upper and lower torso in opposite directions. Position your foot to land at your intended point of stepping advance (*Ding Ba Bu*, 丁八步). Alternatively, after your thrust kick, pull the knee of your kicking leg back quickly to near your chest, before setting your foot on the ground.
2. **Outside edge forward side thrust kick (*Heng Duo Jiao*, 横跺脚):** When using thrust kick with your (lead or rear) leg, you may pivot your torso toward the side of your supporting leg, turn the outside edge of your foot forward, toe inward, rotate your hip and thrust kick to your side. Keep your supporting leg slightly bent, stretch the imaginary spring between your kicking foot and the opposite shoulder, pivot your torso towards the

side of your supporting leg i.e., when kicking with your right leg, pivot towards your left and vice versa. Pull back the knee of your attacking leg quickly before setting foot on the ground to prevent opponent seizing your leg. Always maintain your balance.

3. **Knee Strike and Foot Stomp:** Keep your supporting leg slightly bent. Lift your kicking knee to navel level, toes up, sole parallel to the ground, strike your opponent with your knee or foot; then stomp your foot down on top of your opponent's foot (instep). You can turn the inside edge of your foot to facing outwards or inwards as you bring your foot down. Visualize stretching the imaginary springs connecting your feet to your head (*Shang Xia Zheng Li*, 上下争力). This is useful when in a clinch.

### C. Swing Kicks (*Sao Ti*, 扫踢)

Swing kicks are for long range “out-fighting”; the power comes mainly from a waist twist rapid hip rotation or a body pivot (*Ning Yao Zhuan Shen*, 拧腰转身). They are slow, requiring preparation. To counter swing kicks, step-in and attack a swing kicker on his preparation (*Du Da*, 堵打); to back away from a swing kick is to give a swing kicker room to kick.

1. **Swing kick with the rear leg:** From the left lead small-step posture, keeping your front left supporting leg slightly bent, pivot on the ball of the left foot; twist the hips to the left to swing the bent right leg in an arc (first up then down) to smash the instep or the lower half of your shin on your opponent's rib cage, thigh or knee. The kicking leg is kept bent during the swing (pivot). At the last moment before contact, the lower leg is whipped straight. Tense all muscles as you kick out through your target. Withdraw the kicking leg immediately to prevent it being seized. Keep your left hand raised in a high guard position near your left temple for defense during your right swing kick.
2. Swing kick with the leading leg is quicker but not as powerful e.g., sweep and hook (reap) with the leading leg, backward sweep (reverse swing kick) with the leading leg, etc.

NOTES: For swing kicks, the shoulder and hip may rotate in synch or the shoulder and hip may rotate in opposite directions twisting the body to provide equilibrium.

### D. Knee Strikes (*Xi Fa*, 膝法)

In “out-fighting”, you may raise your knee to avoid strikes or as a shield to cushion the impact of your opponent's kicks. In close range “in-fighting” where full length arm strikes and kicks are impractical; you may strike with your knees. Knee strikes get power from leverage; clinch and pull your opponent downwards as you strike; drive your knee with your hips; do not use knee strikes without holding on to your opponent as you may lose your balance or open yourself to a counter (*Wu Da Bu Shen Tui*, 无搭不伸腿).

1. **Swing Knee:** Hold on to your opponent's arm, shoulder or neck. Powerfully twist your hips thrusting your knee up in a side-way (diagonal, horizontal) arc to smash into your opponent. Direct your force towards his central line while pulling him downwards, towards the side of your striking knee.
2. **Straight Knee:** Hold on to your opponent and pull him forwards and downwards. Step forward to increase power. Thrust your rear knee upward to smash (spike) into your opponent's groin, solar plexus, short ribs, etc. Keep your sole parallel to the ground (toe up) so your foot may strike your opponent's groin in a high knee strike.

Example: Step deeply into your opponent's center gate (*Zhong Men*, 中门) and lift the knee high with upturned toe to strike. The raising knee and toe are the striking points.

#### 4. Heavy bags, Pads and Sparring

In general, kick and withdraw your leg quickly as if kicking onto a red-hot iron plate; tense and focus all your muscles as your leg smashes through the target. Firm foundation in footwork (*Mo Ca Bu*, 摩擦步) and relaxed-standing in one-leg postures (*Du Li Zhuang*, 独立桩, *Dan Tui Yi Tuo Zhuang*, 单腿依托桩) are keys to clean execution of kicking techniques. Mastery of timing, angles, distance interval, and control of engagement opportunities can only come from prolong diligent push-hands and sparring practice. Start with simulated or “touch sparring” (*Qiang Bu*, 抢步) to ingrain the proper execution of your maneuvers. Then, using proper protective equipment, you should practice full contact sparring (*Shi Zhan*, 实战). If you have any questions about a maneuver, the answers can usually be found in sparring.

Kicking pads training, with the help of a knowledgeable partner in free-step mode, improves accuracy, speed, timing, judgment of distance intervals, and angles of your maneuvers. Training with heavy bags sharpens your power discharge/release. As your kick connects, be sure to focus your kick to smash through your target, maintain acceleration as long as there is contact; do not stop your force discharge/release on contact with the target (*Yi Chu Ji Fa*, 一触即发).

#### 5. Examples

Basic skills training and conditioning for kicking:

- a. Side-step with lead foot, side thrust kick (*Heng Duo Jiao*, 横跺脚) with rear foot (outside edge forward) forward and downward. Visualize stretching the imaginary springs between your kicking foot and the opposite shoulder.

- b. Forward step with lead foot, thrust kick (*Deng Ta Jiao*, 蹬踏脚) with rear foot (inside edge forward) forward and downward. Visualize stretching the imaginary springs between your kicking foot and the same side shoulder; there is a twisting of your torso.
- c. Forward step with lead foot, front snap kick with rear foot to the front (to strike your opponent's ankle or shin with your toe) or to the side (to strike your opponent's inner thigh with your shin). Visualize stretching the imaginary springs between your kicking foot and the same side shoulder; there is a twisting of your torso.
- d. Side-step, pivot; strike your opponent's outside thigh with your shin with a low swing kick, bring your kicking leg up then swing it downwards.

When in a clinch, use low swing kicks in leg sweep, hook, and backward sweep throws.

## 6. Tactics

Defensive and offensive tactics remains unchanged:

1. Defend your central line; attack your opponent's central line (*Shou Zhong Yong Zhong*, 守中用中).
2. Synthesize your offensive and defensive actions (*Gong Shou He Yi*, 攻守合一).

In general, attack targets that your opponent must defend; move swiftly to attack from lines and angles where you are least expected; change according to circumstances; compress your opponent's time scale to generate confusion.

Examples:

1. Side step; front snap kick (*Dian Jiao*, 点脚) your opponent's lead foot ankle as he initiate his advance with his lead foot (*Du Da*, 堵打).
2. Thrust kick (*Deng Ta Jiao*, 蹬踏脚) your opponent's hip when he launch a straight punch (*Jie Da*, 截打).

Defense against kicks usually starts with closing the distance and jam the kicks before they reach their strike zone. Do not give room for a kicker to kick.

## 7. Conclusion

诀曰:若真正掌握了内在的运动规律,则可随意变更,不受姿势限制。

Oral Tradition: When you have mastered the internal neuromuscular coordination of a maneuver/technique to deliver the balanced-force, you can adapt and refine its external form as desired, without restriction, become form-less.

In Yiquan training and conditioning, though we emphasized procedures, methods, and postures (*Xing Shi*, 形式), do not be limited or bounded by them; though we stressed the importance of the intentional component (*Yi Nian*, 意念), do not be conscious of its control. If you have mastered the whole-body harmony (*Zheng Ti Xie Tiao*, 整体协调), then you are not limited by physical form and may adapt, change, refine, and re-invent with total freedom to become *form-less* (*Wu Xing*, 无形). Based on Yiquan principles, you must cultivate and develop your innate abilities (*Fa Hui Ben Neng*, 发挥本能); skills must become spontaneous reflexes to be useful.

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